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FIRST PRINCIPLES
OF
ECCLESIASTICAL TRUTH.

FIRST PRINCIPLES
OF
ECCLESIASTICAL TRUTH.

ESSAYS ON
THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY.

BY
J. BALDWIN BROWN, B.A.,

AUTHOR OF "THE DIVINE LIFE IN MAN," "THE SOUL'S EXODUS," "THE HOME LIFE," ETC.



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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE DOCTRINE OF THE INFALLIBLE	1—125
I. WHAT IS TRUTH?	3
II. THE INFALLIBLE CHURCH	25
III. THE INFALLIBLE BOOK	73
IV. THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST	103
THE NATURAL HISTORY OF ANTI- CHRIST	127—172
THE CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH	173—207
THE REVOLUTION OF THE LAST QUARTER OF A CENTURY.	209—364
I. THE INTELLECTUAL REVOLUTION	215
II. THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION	255
III. THE ECCLESIASTICAL REVOLUTION	297
IV. THE THEOLOGICAL REVOLUTION	335

P R E F A C E.

THE Essays in this volume, though they do not form a series, have yet, as will be seen, a close relation to each other. Most of them were delivered in the form of lectures or discourses, and though they have been remodelled, some trace of their original form will probably remain. I have just closed a ministry of twenty-four years at Claylands Chapel, and with part of my congregation have taken possession of a new and larger church which we have recently built in the Brixton Road. The works which I have hitherto published, and which have been received with much kindness by the circle of readers to which they were addressed, have been chiefly discourses on topics of Christian thought or experience. It occurred to me that just at this crisis of my ministry it might be well to put together some record of my teaching on the social and ecclesiastical questions which in these days a preacher is bound to study, and on which it is expected that he should have

some guidance to offer to the people of his charge. I hope that I shall be fully credited when I say that I feel very strongly the perplexity of the subjects which are treated in the following Essays, a perplexity of which those who think least about them least feel the pressure. But the sense of the deep difficulty of a subject is no reason why an author should not offer his thoughts to the public, as far as he seems to himself to see with tolerable clearness. Whether the thoughts are worth offering, the public will judge with infallible truth.

As in all controversial matters, so in these also, my aim has been to understand my opponent's case as he himself understands it, as far as I have been able, and to do the same justice in statement to the views which I controvert as to my own. I cannot hope that I have done so with complete success. But I have done my best, believing that when opponents understand each other, and can do justice to each other's aims, they are not far from the settlement of their controversies.

The last four lectures were delivered as a kind of farewell to that portion of the congregation which I was leaving to carry on the work in the old place. They contain a brief review of the period of my ministry there. It has been my custom to deliver

in the course of each winter a series of lectures on some historical subject or period, both for my own sake and the sake of the congregation. A thorough study of a great period of history counteracts the narrowing influence which ministers and people are apt to contract from exclusive occupation with what are often very partially spiritual interests and activities. If I may speak as an elder, I would earnestly advise my younger brethren to adopt the same method, or something like it; it will help to keep their minds, and those of their people, open to the larger aspects and influences of truth. Last winter I took as the subject of my course of lectures "The Last Quarter of a Century." I am obeying a very strongly expressed wish in now offering them to the public.

J. BALDWIN BROWN.

10, THE CRESCENT,
CLAPHAM COMMON,
December, 1870.

The Doctrine of the Infallible.

I.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

The Doctrine of the Infallible.

I.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

WERE these words of Pilate uttered in contempt, or in despair? It is an open question. They might as well express the sneer of a sensual and callous nature, as the question of a hungry and pining heart. But as Pilate, with the Truth—or, as he himself must have discovered, with one who was capable of speaking with authority about truth—before him, tarried not for an answer, it is probable that the Roman Procurator of Judæa felt little else than contempt for truth and for its oracle—a contempt which was, perhaps, not altogether untinged with despair. But, be this as it may, it is the question of all human philosophies; in one shape or other, by affirmations, by speculations, by denials, they urge it on the intellect and conscience of mankind. Age to age reiterates it with more or less of passionate eagerness, and the cry seems to rise loudest, clearest, most importunate, from the heart of that Christendom, which is founded on the express revelation of the mind of the God of truth to the world. Keen as has been the cry of

the unsatisfied human heart through all the ages of heathen darkness, the question, What is truth? has been heard with far sharper and more bitter emphasis from lands and from ages in which is shining as with meridian splendour "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"—so little is truth a thing which, by a mere act of revelation, the mere shining forth of a light, can be given to mankind.

When Pilate spoke these words, the long vigil of ages was ending; the heathen search after God, if haply He might be found, had reached its appointed issue—despair; and the "eureka" of man's spiritual nature, the "I have found Him, I have found Him," was about to burst from very humble and unskilled lips upon the world. But as far as the heathen intellect could search or see, the end of the quest was a state of mind which vibrated between indifference and despair. It had become evident to the keenest questioners that by the organ of the pure intellect no truth could be discovered on which man could rest, and by which man could live. "After that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God," writes St. Paul, in describing the whole course of the gentile search for the true, the good, the divine. It was felt, more or less definitely, that the God whom man's intellect could discover, and whose form he could represent, could be but the magnified image of himself, a gigantic spectre of his own form projected on the mists of the ideal world. But man, in the wisdom of God,—a wisdom, be it understood, entirely

loving, and not cold or scornful, as some Christian as well as heathen thinkers have dreamed,—was left to push the search to its ultimate conclusion. He was ordained to strain every faculty of his being in the effort to which some divine instinct in his own soul impelled him, the effort to discover *THE TRUTH*, to shape to himself some clear image of God.

We say that the wisdom of God which ordained this was entirely loving, for the endeavour is the most perfect school discipline of the faculties of man's intellect and spirit. Man had never risen to his full intellectual stature, he had never realized the truly godlike range of his power, if he had not been left to grope alone in the darkness, and to read for himself the unknown Name. Man was to be drawn forth, as it were, to his full form and force, before God would meet him with His revelation. The educating him, the drawing him forth and up, was the work of those heathen ages in which the intellect, ever searching, was ever baffled, and at last, in the great mass of thinkers at any rate, was preparing to give up the quest in broken-hearted despair.

We speak proudly of the culture of Christendom, as though it were a thing entirely by itself in the world. It might humble us to learn how much of that splendid outburst of moral and intellectual power which the Christian ages have witnessed is the child of the futile efforts of the great Greek thinkers. They bequeathed to the world no legacy of realized truth, but they handed down to the Christian ages an intellect trained and developed

to its full perfection, and a method which Christendom has not been able to improve. Man was thereby made ready to receive the revelation, to embrace it, to contain it, and to use it as an instrument for the discovery of the deeper mysteries of God. Judged by the results in the discovery of positive truth, the satisfaction of man's nature, and the edification of his life on a broad, firm, sure foundation, those ages were ages of dreary failure. Perhaps there had never been a generation since the creation in which the cry, *What is truth?* would mean more either of contempt or of despair than in that generation of which Pilate was the mouthpiece. Yet that generation was the heir of the whole course of gentile speculation; it was saturated with the wisdom of all the philosophic schools. Everything which man had discovered within the bounds of civilisation, it knew; the panaceas of all the philosophies for all the ills which flesh is heir to, it had by heart. There was hardly a school of thought or a form of religion which had not its expositor in Rome. It had the vantage-ground of all the ages in point of complete knowledge of all that the world's speculation had done, or could do, to help it. The whole past of the world's effort in literature, art, and philosophy, the thoughts of Greeks, Alexandrians, Jews, Persians, Syrians, Buddhists, Brahmins, had all of them free course and full influence in that Augustan age of Rome. The influence of the most distant Asiatic theosophism was not unrepresented; each new student finds fresh reason to believe that the Asiatic systems had tinged very

deeply the philosophies of the Oriental regions of the Empire; which again, during the age of the first Cæsars, produced a very profound effect on the intellectual and moral life of the West. And the cry, What is truth? in tones of bitter mockery or fierce despair, seemed to be the only fruit of it all. Nay, not the only fruit; there was a larger breadth of humanity cultivated and developed in that age than in any previous age of the world. Man was larger, wider, deeper, stronger, through the stern discipline of these ages of heathen speculation and experiment; and the conviction was growing very strong in the best minds of the Empire, that the solution of the great problem was to be found less in the intellectual than in the moral sphere.

Philosophy, in the age of the first Cæsars, was unquestionably more sad, more hopeless, than in any previous age of history. Seneca, its chief teacher, perhaps, though not its noblest, spoke with a kind of rapturous thankfulness of the exodus which he always had open to him from the cares and the dreads of life by suicide; while a far nobler man, Epictetus, in his passionate, despairing cry, "Show me a Stoic!" seems to repeat, in a more solemn and earnest key, the question of Pilate to our Lord. The speculations of the thinkers did nothing, absolutely nothing, to lighten the darkness and to lift the burdens of the great mass of their fellows. And yet no honest student of that age can, I imagine, be blind to the clear advance of the spiritual element, as compared with the intellectual, which marked its philosophy—the growing

feeling that somehow, through man's moral nature and moral relations, would come to him the answer to the question of questions, What is truth? During the later ages of Greek speculation, there had been a very marked and significant change in the tone of the philosophic schools. Partly, perhaps, owing to the exhaustive efforts of the great masters of the age of political freedom and energy to discover the truth of things, of the great universe, and of man's relations all round him; and partly, probably, through the decay of public virtue, and interest in political affairs, consequent on the establishment of great monarchies, and the ceaseless strife in which they plunged the world; the thinkers drew off from the great questions of being, and concentrated their attention mainly on man, with a view to discover wherein his true welfare consists. The question increasingly took the form, How is man to protect and assure his happiness in such a world as this? The political condition of the times had much to do with the transition, but there was a deeper reason for it. The student of the philosophy of human progress can hardly fail to see in the rivalries of the Epicurean and Stoic schools—twin shoots from one stem—a certain preparation of society for the great question of man's condition, relations, and destinies, which Christianity would propound to the world. It seems to be a very marked though unconscious preparation for the Gospel, that just in the age in which the Gospel of the Grace of God was beginning its career of triumph, the thoughts of men, in their eager, earnest, passionate search for

truth, were turned increasingly to the spiritual sphere. The flower was turning kindly towards the light as yet unseen. Some prophetic glow was drawing it, and preparing it to bask in the quickening, cherishing beams, when at length they should burst upon the world.

Thus much on the attitude of Pilate, and the culture which he represented, before the question of absolute and ultimate truth. But the present subject is a much wider one—man's sense of his need, under all conditions and in all ages, of an infallible guidance—a knowledge of truth and duty which he can accept as final—on which he can rest as on a rock, as he goes about his heaven-appointed work.

The need arises mainly out of his sense of the awful magnitude and perplexity of the problems of life;—awful, I say, for so they have seemed to all peoples and to all souls who have looked the conditions of man's life fairly in the face. How fearfully the magnitude and the perplexity of the problem presses, we may gather from the long, sustained, and even agonizing effort which the world's purest and strongest spirits have put forth to solve it. We speak with admiration of the heroism of the soldier—cool, calm, persistent, with death raging all round him, and the life draining from its springs. We are caught chiefly by what we *see*; visible conflict, endurance, conquest of suffering, on the battle-field, strike us strongly; we can set it clearly before the mind's eye even when we read about it; it stirs the blood and

fires the eye ; we hear the clash of arms, the shouts of war, and our passions—for we are combative animals by nature—seem to make us, by sympathy, actors in the fray. But the true hero of the world is the thinker, agonizing day after day, year after year, to solve the problem of life's mystery ; searching wearily, painfully, in the region of the unknown for some slight hints of truth or signs of God. Baffled, beaten, yet ever renewing his quest ; each one taking up the problem where his forerunner had left it, catching the torch from the failing grasp of the exhausted athlete, and bearing it on with new-born ardour, till, spent himself at length, he passes it on, as he drops, to a younger and stronger hand. The heroes of battles have their names emblazoned on the roll of this world's glory, to perish with it in the final fire ; the heroes of thought, of science, have their names inscribed on more lasting tablets and in fairer lines. We shall read that roll when we rise to the sphere where “the teachers shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and those that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” How nobly, how intensely, the great masters in the schools of thought have striven to search out for us the mysteries of life and destiny ! Was there any soldier who lived a life so essentially heroic as Benedict Spinoza's, in his day ? These are the men who are the world's true heroes and martyrs, though their battle-field is mainly watched by the angels, and men find out what manner of men they were chiefly when they are dust.

And the problems which they search out for us with such indomitable strength and courage, may well task the energies of the chief masters in the schools of life. That can be no easy life to live which wrung from the purest and noblest man that ever lived, save one, the cry, "*O miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" There are deep convictions and far-reaching thoughts in man, which impel him to seek to regulate his course by higher considerations than those which he can gather out of the conditions of life which he shares with the brutes. He cannot help judging himself, and oftentimes condemning himself; sometimes he even hates, loathes himself, as he sees, far up in the height, some idea of a life which he knows that he was born to aim at, and which is honestly within reach of his powers, while he finds himself grovelling, perhaps wallowing in the pleasures of this world like the brutes.

What is this power to judge ourselves, to condemn ourselves, to see a law of duty, to recognize a standard of righteousness, which seems to have sanctions in some reality outside of our being, with which we cannot tamper, and which we are powerless to destroy? Where does it abide? What are these sanctions? Are they really independent of my nature? Am I a subject, or am I an autocrat, in this sphere of moral activity and life? This faculty seems to grow weaker with the years if it is scoffed at; it appears at last to die down. Does it really die? May we wear it out as we may wear out a habit of body, and be free from its torment-

ing suggestions and its stern requisitions for ever? Nay; or whence this "dread of something after death," which is as deep-rooted as the sense of God's righteousness in our being? Shall we then find these laws when we pass out into the unseen? are their awful forms the first that shall greet us there? Though we wear them out by our habits here, will they wear us out by their retributions at last? These are the problems which have haunted the heart and the conscience of humanity in all ages; and the dread of their possible issues has fastened on man's heart so sternly, that he has doomed himself voluntarily to unutterable agonies, and has borne them heroically, that the dread might be laid at rest. But in vain, in vain; the shadow is over him still.

But is it real? is it a power outside us which grasps and holds us, omnipotent itself, while we are crushed like moths in its hand? Is it God's righteousness which thus judges and condemns? It seems to vary in successive ages and civilisations. The standard of moral judgment is constantly fluctuating. The virtue of one age is the vice of another. Habits which in one country are honourable, in another are branded as base. There is enough variation in moral judgments according to culture and civilisation to suggest the question, Is not this moral law the mere fruitage of man's natural endowments,—the idea which he gradually shapes to himself through long experience of the conditions under which he can best work and enjoy himself in his world. But man has never rested

long in this solution. There must be something within him which it deeply dissatisfies, and which forbids him to clasp it as the ultimate and absolute truth. The more earnestly men have searched into the nature and the sanctions of this law which judges them, the more profoundly have they been perplexed by its contrarieties,—the more difficult have they found it to tell themselves and each other what it is, how it works, who sustains it, and whether they shall find it in full force beyond the shades. God's righteousness! Yes! something within me echoes the affirmation. And yet I see no form, I hear no voice. It seems to rise up within me, out of my own spirit, as if it were part of my being; and yet it judges me, it dooms me. What is the truth?

Again, there is a spirit within me which moves me to deeds which I cannot explain or justify, by anything that I can see within the limits of my present life in this mundane sphere. What is this mystery of self-denial, self-sacrifice, which I can see to be the ruling principle in those whom the world chiefly shrines in its reverence? It has inspired the actions on which, as on the heroic self-devotion of those three hundred at Thermopylæ, has hung the development of the higher destinies of mankind. If one thing seems to be written more plainly than another in the book of human history, it is the ministry of utter self-abnegation and self-sacrifice to the best interests of our race. By the blood of its martyrs in science, literature, art, politics, as well as religion, the world truly lives. Pilgrims and sojourners here, men who have declared plainly by

their spirit and their work that they could find here no continuing city, and no rest, no home for their souls, have been the leaders whose names stand forth most clearly blazoned on the roll of this earth's elect. And something within me stirs me to sympathy and imitation. I too am a man, and a man called to play this godlike part, and to find the true kindred of my spirit among the heroes, and not among the brutes. Something within me, which the record of these lives strangely kindles, calls me to pursue a course which may wreck utterly my worldly fortunes; which may possibly end my martyr life by a martyr death. What is this "from within me"? I, sacrificing myself, deliberately wrecking all my pleasures, all my hopes! It is a strange nature, a strange life, a strange world, in which such things may be, nay, *must* be done!

But is there no delusion here—no mocking spirit tempting me to my perdition? Is it not the shadow projected by a diseased imagination which I pursue? There are moments when it seems so; when a great sense of the unreality of all these unseen shadowy things seems to settle like a night over the spirit. But then it is night. I am conscious of darkness—nay, of the feter and foulness of corruption, when I yield myself to these moods, and cry, "Let me eat and drink, for to-morrow I die." I cannot refuse to recognize that I seem to live while I pursue these higher things, while when I treat them as shadows I die. The life which takes no note of them, and pays no homage to them, I could not live long without unspeakable loathing; while

the hours I remember most joyfully are the hours in which some unselfish effort or sacrifice stirred the sluggish pulses of my heart. I see, then, that tremendous issues are hanging on decisions the very nature and reasons of which in a measure evade me. I may be called at any moment, for a thing as impalpable as an idea, to step forth into a great dark world of which I know nothing, and which I only think to be. Or do I only dream? Is this great leap in the dark all that is left to me; and are not those the wrecks of souls that have leapt and perished, which gleam there so ghastly through the shades? Who can tell me! And yet how much depends upon my knowing. It is hard to tell what truth is, what duty is, what righteousness is; and yet I cannot escape their stern compulsions. Or is it simply that I cannot lay their ghosts? Will the God who made me leave me to stagger, to stumble on in this horrible darkness, thus haunted? Is there anything which can serve my need in these straits, this anguish of life, but the voice of an infallible Guide, and the touch of an omnipotent Hand?

And the difficulty is deepened when we consider the rigid sternness of the system of things by which we are surrounded, which meets our every error and folly by sharp strokes and shocks. Man soon discovers that though he may make his nature what he will, may contort or corrupt it at his pleasure, he can neither make nor unmake, contort nor corrupt, his world. If things around him were as plastic to his hand as the powers and passions of his own nature, he might continue to be a law unto himself through

eternity. But things obey another law, stern and inexorable: nor have they the faintest pity for error or sin. It is no sentimental trouble or perplexity which I have been considering; nor does it concern only a man's inward world. It is not a question of the inner concord—how a man may best set himself in his practical life in most perfect harmony with his highest and purest ideas. He finds that he is living in a world in which every error is a loss, in which every transgression is a sharp sting of pain. He cannot make mistakes about duty without finding himself in sore perplexity, distress, and confusion. He cannot wilfully neglect or transgress a law without paying a bitter penalty. And if he fails through ignorance, the bitterness is mitigated, but the pain remains still. The moment that he wanders from a certain "narrow path," which a sure teacher has told us is hard to find and hard to keep, he comes at once into collision with things and beings, and suffers keenly in the shock. He may think himself right, for "a man's way seemeth right in his own eyes," until "God searcheth the heart;" but if he is wrong, he will find it out, and bewail it in shame and pain.

How much of the misery that we can recall has grown through our blindly blundering on in a course or in a mood which we were persuaded was a right one, but which now we see had pride, self-will, envy, or some other folly or baseness at its heart. But right as we thought it, or rather tried to think it,—for much of our error about right is like a child's fear of apparitions, the result of not looking things

honestly and bravely in the face,—it yet brought to us no blessing. It exposed us to pain at every turn. Do what we would, strenuously as we might bring the will to bear, we could not make the course of things run smoothly with it, nor could we make the men whose judgment we valued honour and applaud it. Slowly the thought forced itself upon us that the path was a wrong one, or that the mood was selfish; and we began with shame to seek a more excellent way. But the way is desperately hard to find. “How strait is the gate, how narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” But bitter experience in the past has proved to us that we must find it, or wait and moan, a burden to others, a burden to ourselves—ministers, not of life and blessing, but of sorrow and bane to our world.

Ah, could we but make our world to fit us! But the problem is of quite another complexion. We have to fit ourselves to our world. It is the problem of life, to bring ourselves into harmony with the profound, mysterious, and complex system of things around us; and we are in the dark as to much of it, as to most of it. Life with many is one long, sad discovery of mistakes. But we are not spared on that account. We may weep bitter tears of penitence or regret; but the very next step, if a false one, will plunge us into fresh troubles, and pierce us through with fresh pain. We get disheartened and daunted. Will it ever be right with us? Shall we ever find the currents with us, and the winds propitious; or, is it to be always “toiling in rowing,” with “the wind

contrary"? How many whose hearts are sad and even hopeless about life, may read these words. Always blundering, always erring, always doing the wrong things, and drawing down on themselves sharp shocks of pain.

We want one thing, the only thing, which can help and save us. We want the God who made and who rules all things, who upholds these laws which meet us everywhere with their shocks, to mark out for us the path of security and peace. We want God to mark our every step for us, and to hedge up our paths that we may not stray. And God seems far, and His counsel seems dark. "Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."

Some, and those not the weakest or most worthless of our race, are so weary through this quest of truth, so bruised, wounded, maimed through this experiment of duty, they err so frequently, they fail so constantly, they suffer so miserably, that they fall insensibly into Pilate's mood. They give up the quest as hopeless; and catch at any formulary of truth, or any order of men, which seems even to offer an authoritative guidance; and thus they lull their conscience asleep till the last great shock awakens it again—and for ever.

A further, and a still more dread element in the problem, is the ever-deepening misery of error and sin.

The saddest thing about life, perhaps, is that its difficulties do not lighten, but deepen, as man pursues his self-willed path. He does not simply pass out

of a higher into a lower sphere, where he can find things and beings in tune with him, and where he can work out the problem of his life in a poorer but tolerably satisfactory way. He cannot lower the pitch of the relation of his being to the system of things around him at his will. If, for instance, a man with a brutalized nature, and a bestial habit of indulgence, could quietly settle down into a beast, could sink all that is godlike—that is, all that is manlike, in him for ever, and make a god of his belly, no doubt a certain dull satisfaction would be within his reach. Quite other than this, and far more terrible, is the law of man's development. The human, the godlike, will not suffer itself to be destroyed. It abides within, the torment, the scourge of the reprobate sinner, maddening him with the pangs of a remorse which might move the pity of the very fiends of hell. We do not find practically, to draw an illustration from a very visible sphere, that the life of the veteran drunkard, or sensualist, grows easier and flows more smoothly on as it draws near its bourne. On the contrary, the bitter fruits accumulate; the shame writes its brand upon the brow, the palsy strikes its shudder into the limbs, the eyes get sodden in their sockets, the brain softens, the hand quivers, the steps stagger, and the whole man becomes a wreck—perhaps more dire, more ghastly than any other *thing* which exists in this universe in the animate or in the inanimate worlds. Far from finding a lower level of safe self-indulgence, the power of self-indulgence decays, while the appetite remains; and the banquet of

Tantalus fitly images the issue of such a life—to last while such a life endures.

In truth, the miseries of error and sin grow round a man and accumulate upon him in arithmetical progression. Every onward step is into deeper trouble, denser gloom. The worn-out profligate but presents the visible image of the wreck which the angels see already, in the man who has indulged to the top of his bent envy, hatred, malice, selfishness, avarice, or worldly ambition. There is no fitting of the surroundings to the condition of the spirit possible in the future of transgression. There is nothing possible but growing misery, darkening dread, deepening despair. And man shrinks appalled from the prospect. Who is sufficient for these things? is the despairing cry of his spirit. Error is so easy, sin is so pleasant, and the issues of both are so tremendous, that life becomes a burden too heavy to be borne. Freedom is too sad and perilous an endowment for man to accept it willingly. God has laid it on him as a burden, but he trembles, he cowers beneath it. And let none say that these views of the burden of a free existence are exaggerated—that they are the result of an overstrained, Christian civilisation, and can touch with their pressure only the highly cultivated few of our race. The history of the great heathen faiths is in this matter quite parallel to the history of the Christian. That faith which rivals Christianity in its wide-spread influence, and its power of conquering various, diverse peoples, is so possessed with this sense of the burden of life, that a

state which we can hardly distinguish from annihilation is what it passionately desires and seeks as its heaven. It is man's inheritance as man, this great burden, and it throws him wellnigh helpless on the help of God. The only condition which would make freedom tolerable with such a nature as his, with such a life to live, with such issues in sight, would be the unerring voice of the God who made both him and the system of things around him, marking with indisputable lines his path of duty, and indicating with His own hand every step of the way.

The truth is that man shrinks from freedom when he fairly grasps all that it involves. The Antinomian and the mystic, as well as the Buddhist and the Pantheist, seek to discharge themselves of the burden, and cast it upon Nature or upon God. The chances, not to say the certainties, of failure in life are too many, and the issues are too terrible to be calmly faced. Who would dare to take up the burden of a man's life under such conditions? Is not the Being who imposed the burden without our will bound to take charge of the experiment, and to guide the trembling, uncertain steps of the children whom He has sent out amid these snares, and sloughs, and pits of death? We can see that life may be beautiful, and even glorious, with a man's faculty, in such a universe as this. It might be a blessed thing to be; now it is only terrible. The universe is full of beauty, and the springs of pure joys abound. But the beauty constantly ensnares us; and how many of the springs are made Marah, bitterness, by our sin! Better, we say, to live a

hermit life, to shut eyes, and ears, and heart, and be as a dead man to all the world's beauty and delight, to all life's interest and joy. Nay, perhaps better be dead, and have done with it for ever. But we live on, and face life's problems, and try life's paths. God wills that we shall live on. He listens to no prayers of ours to unbind us and to loose us from the load. Is He not bound, then, to guide us? May we not, have we not a right, are we not bound to make over to Him the guidance of our lives? Freedom we dare not face, with only our own reason to lead and our own strength to uphold us. There must be for shortsighted, trembling, tottering mortals some infallible help from God. And so the dream of an infallible Guide grows upon man's spirit. The way in which he searches for it, and persuades himself that he has found it, we shall endeavour in the following chapters to expound.

II.

THE INFALLIBLE CHURCH.

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IT appears inevitable, considering the dread complexity and perplexity of the problem of life, that man should look longingly and hopefully for some guidance from on high. The argument seems to be unanswerable that God cannot have sent us forth with such a nature as ours, into such a world as this, to live a life on which such tremendous issues are hanging, without purposing to bring His own unerring wisdom and His own almighty hand to our aid. God has not left us, God cannot leave us, to bear this great burden, to fight this great battle of life, alone. He made it His battle and His burden from the first; and one main aim of all His discipline is to convince us how completely He shares that pressure which would crush us, but that His sympathy, His suffering with us, enables us to endure. He offers to us guidance, He offers to us strength—guidance which cannot mislead, and strength which cannot fail. But He demands from us high spiritual effort in return. We must open the eye of the spirit to see the light

which He offers to us ; we must lift the hand of faith to clasp the strength which He holds forth to be our stay. And man is naturally faithless ; he shrinks from high spiritual effort ; and, indeed, by the life which, in the main, he is content to live, he disqualifies himself for its exercise. He would gladly substitute an act of the understanding for an effort of the spirit, and would rather seek guidance from a formula which his intellect can wholly grasp, than from a spiritual light. It would seem that the great effort of his nature as a spiritual being, as the history of his religious development sets it forth, has been to get the sure guidance and firm support which he is profoundly conscious that he needs, on terms less exacting to his spiritual nature, more cognizable by his understanding, and even by his senses, than those which God proffers by His Spirit in His Word. This is the “lusting of the flesh against the spirit” in this region of experience, in which the Apostle finds the key to man’s inner history. Turning from the light, the Life, which is the light of men, he is ever making for himself and bowing down to infallible idols, be it a church, be it a man, be it a book. These idols God is ever casting down and shattering ; while man, with that strange pertinacity of unbelief with which the Spirit has to struggle in all ages of human history, is as constantly striving to set them up afresh. The forms of this idolatry—for idolatry it is—the ways in which we all, turning from the light of God, are ever inventing forms of infallible guidance for ourselves, and baptizing them

with the Divine name—it will be my object to consider in this and the following chapters.

The first which challenges attention is the doctrine of the Infallible, which has been held, with more or less clear understanding of its terms, by the Catholic Church throughout the whole Mediæval period, which has developed or degenerated during the Roman—that is, the post-Reformation period—into that dogma of Papal Infallibility which really lies behind all the pretensions of Rome.

It is impossible, in this brief chapter, to attempt any elaborate historical criticism of the dogma; and, indeed, except from some very learned ecclesiastical theologian, any such criticism would be superfluous. For the views of some of the ablest and most learned men in Europe have been placed before the English public in the simplest and most accessible form. He would be a bold man who should imagine that he can add anything of value to the complete discussion of the dogma which the authors of “Janus,” the Correspondent of the *Augsburg Gazette*, Dr. Döllinger, and others of eminent reputation, have placed before the world. And these treatises have been translated into English, and are published in a cheap form; so that every one interested in the historical controversy may easily learn what the wisest men in Europe know and think upon the subject.* “Janus” is simply a masterpiece of controversial criticism. The authors

* A remarkably able series of papers on the history and literature of the subject has appeared in the *Saturday Review*. We hope that it may be republished in a more permanent form.

and their coadjutors have absolutely demolished the historical argument for the dogma. Probably in the whole history of controversy there was never demolition so complete. But yet the idea lives on, and the work proceeds. A multitude of able men in all parts of the world believe in it, and find in it the keystone of the arch of the policy of the Church. Forgery and falsehood are the two pillars on which it is proved conclusively that this assumption rests; and yet, one is tempted to say, there must have been something very profoundly congenial to the mental and moral condition of the great mass of "the faithful" in these ideas, if forgery and falsehood could establish for them an unquestioned supremacy which has endured unbroken through centuries, and now is developed into a dogma which is the natural and legitimate outgrowth of the whole—the infallibility of the Papal See. It is with this wonderful and, at first sight, inexplicable phenomenon, rather than with the history of the growth of Papal assumption, that I concern myself in these pages. If we can understand how the thing came to grow, and what want it appears to supply, we shall be able to comprehend better the Christian doctrine, which, in a subsequent chapter, I shall endeavour to set forth.

The first greatly notable fact in the history of Christianity, after the apostolic age, is the very rapid development of the sacramental idea of grace. "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel," said St. Paul. How many years elapsed after the death of St. Paul before the Gospel passed into the

background, and the sacraments came to occupy the front place in the estimation of the Church? What, speaking broadly and with extreme compression, was the cause and significance of this? It is to be noted that there was a precisely similar development or decadence, as we may choose to call it, under the elder dispensation. That love of God, and love to God, which were the soul of the relations established under the law, the personal affinity of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to every child of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, passed out of sight, and the *things* of the law, the services and ceremonials which sustained to the old dispensation the relation which the sacraments sustain to the new, occupied the whole stage. So thoroughly did the living things vanish, and the dead ceremonial occupy their room, that Isaiah was moved to this withering denunciation of the very rites which God had established to be the organs and expressions of living thought and love, but which had become a sepulchre in which all living thought and love were entombed, with no hope of resurrection: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah: To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons

and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow" (Isa. i. 10—17). Precisely the same process goes on in every religious movement. In the first generations, the inspiring principle, the life, touches and kindles men. Then the life dies down, and the forms which once expressed it succeed to idolatrous reverence in its room. It is as true of heathen religions as of the various forms which Christianity has assumed. In the religion of Buddha (who has recently turned up as a Roman Catholic saint!) the degeneration was equally rapid and conspicuous. A candid comparison of George Fox with modern Quakerism, of John Robinson with modern Independency, of John Wesley with modern Methodism, will show the same principle at work, though in milder forms, and with more limited results of deterioration. And this principle in the early centuries withdrew from men's sight and thought that Life which is the light of men, and substituted service and sacrament in its room. Though it must be borne in mind, in watching this process of degeneration, that some rich leaven of the vital prin-

ciples of a faith abides in the formalisms into which it tends to degenerate, and through them it still continues to exercise some quickening and educating influence on the world. Christian civilisation is a great reality; there has been development in one direction, if there has been degradation in another. It seems as if the law were that the Church should mainly monopolize the deadening influence, while the vitality breaks out in the general body of society, animating and educating it in manifold and wonderful ways.

But what is behind this process at whose history we have glanced? Surely the question of St. Paul, "Who is sufficient for these things?"—this high effort of spiritual contemplation, this high strain of spiritual life. It is easier for the indolent spirit of man to accept a creed from some authoritative teacher, than to reason one out from the Scripture through the lessons of experience and the teaching of the Holy Ghost. It is easier to submit to rigorous discipline, than to train the spirit to "live godly in Christ Jesus." It is easier to endure any measure of bodily penance, than "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God." And so from the first men fell easily into the hands of the scribes and priests of the Church, who gradually formed a ruling order in Christendom, and drew into their own power that knowledge of the truth which the Lord made a common heritage of mankind, the administration of that discipline which the Lord made the Father's ministry to every human spirit, and the keys of that kingdom which the Lord threw open

to the whole human world. The root of Church corruption, of the degradation of Christian ideas, is man's dread of the invisible; his shrinking from the spiritual; the eagerness of his carnal heart to deal with man rather than with God. There is a notable instance of this in the old world history. It explains Christendom still: "Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it" (Deut. v. 25—27). And this progress of corruption was immensely forwarded by—nay, was inextricably mixed up with—the moral, social, and political condition of the times. The brief peace which prevailed through the civilised world at the time of the Advent (and it is significant that it was in the very focus of civilisation that Christ was born), was soon broken, and the world entered on a more terrible era of strife and misery. Literature, culture, social and political order, declined—that is, declined in a sense. The comparison between the organization of the Empire in the third and fourth centuries, and the utter disorganization of everything in the sixth, shows how thoroughly the social structure perished, and presents from the point of order a mournful contrast. A comparison of the units of society, the German and the Roman man;

the household, the farm, the village, the materials of which the structure of society is fashioned, and by which it grows, shows that as between the sixth century and the fourth a mighty step of progress had been gained. But this is by the way. The irruption of the "barbarians" into the desolate and exhausted fields of the Empire brought new thoughts, habits, and languages into the field. How the Celtic and German peoples, to say nothing of peoples yet more strange, could be got to understand a Gospel written in a foreign tongue, and in a state of society utterly foreign to their habits and conditions, is a question not easily answered. Translations may be suggested. But the languages were in constant flux, and were little fit for literary use. Translations into the old mother-tongues of the young nations which began to be and to grow within the bosom of the Empire, would very rapidly become archaic, and could be but of limited popular service, when culture—and we must remember that this is a legitimate source of power—was almost exclusively confined to the priests.

It is easy to understand, then, how in those ages, after the breaking up of the Empire in the fifth century, the Gospel fell into the background; while the living priest, with his sacraments, who could always make himself understood, and who had very terrible means at his command of magnifying the importance of his office and his instruments, made the Church the spiritual guide and ruler of men. In an age in which literary culture is impossible, and literary criticism an unknown art, the truth

must almost of necessity betake itself to some material ark to preserve itself, and by the acts and functions of instructed persons who are credited as its organs must wield its chief influence over men. Such a stage of development, for thus we may fairly call it, looking at it on a large scale, as Christianity passed through during the mediæval period of European history, was the necessary condition, apart from perpetual miracles, of its existence and ministry as the most powerful factor in the progress of society. It is hard to understand how the spiritual power could be brought to bear on mediæval society, save by some such instrument as the mediæval Church; while it is equally hard to comprehend how that Church could have become that instrument, except through some such process of development as we have traced, the *exuviae* of which are now visible at Rome.

But the revolution which substituted the sacraments for the Gospel, and the authority of the Church for the guidance of the Holy Ghost, had long been in progress before the overthrow of the Empire. And the causes of it from the first were substantially those which we have already traced. The great mass of the early converts were ignorant and unlearned men, while the clergy were instructed in the knowledge of the Christian records, and easily and naturally, by no purpose of usurpation, became in an uncultured and demoralized society the custodians, the expositors, and ultimately the arbiters of the truth. A very strong conviction too was entertained in the early Church that the Christian community

was a great commonwealth, the unity of which must be definite and visible. One evil result of the long and fierce battle between Christianity and the pagan Empire was the complete and elaborate organization of the Church. The body became compactly and powerfully developed; and this form of the Christian community was handed down as a legacy to the Middle Ages, when as the dividing line between ancient and modern society the peace of the Church was established and secured. This visible unity could only be exhibited by common assent to dogmas and customs. The saving truths, the sacred rites and customs, could only be settled for the whole Church by those who should have a claim to represent it and power to speak in its name. The growth of the episcopal power, at the expense of the clergy and the people, is another feature which we should expect to be developed out of the state of things which we have described above. The bishops claimed to represent the Church, as in an especial sense the organs of the Holy Ghost; and the idea was very naturally entertained, and wrought out into shape when the peace of the Church rendered it possible that a general assembly of the bishops of the Christian world could be held, to settle authoritatively what the faithful were to believe, that is, what the Scriptures really inculcated, and the rites which they were to observe, the customs which they were to honour, that is, what the apostles really enjoined.

The overweening importance which was attached to uniformity of doctrine and practice in the earlier

Christian ages,—the earnestness with which, for instance, a man so Catholic and discerning as Bæda wrote about it,—can only be understood in the light of the idea that it was the order of a divinely constituted home which was in question ; and that confusion in the belief and customs of the Church implied confusion in the councils of heaven, and uncertain utterance from the lips of God. Men of pious and reverent minds fought against it as against the very principle of Babel ; it was the form to them in which the spirit of evil was most zealously counterworking the spirit of truth and order in the world. Hence, while we believe far more deeply in the apparent confusion of liberty than in the apparent order of uniformity, we can comprehend how the authoritative decision on points of faith and order passed into the hands of the rulers of the Church in council assembled ; and how the decisions of Councils which were held to be representative of Christendom, were accepted as the authoritative standards of faith and practice throughout the whole Christian world. Visible order was the essential thing in the estimation of the men of those days, and it is hard to see how by any other less cumbrous and faulty method the visible order could be maintained and assured.

We may smile in these days at the zeal for this visible order. But it is worth our while to ask ourselves how in those stormy and unlettered times a spiritual order could maintain and manifest itself. Spiritual unity requires conditions for its manifestation which were then wanting, and men were in a

measure driven—witness Bæda's noble but perplexed testimony about the spirit of the British bishops—to over-prize visible unity in its room. How lamentably deficient in all that can righteously command the respect and claim the obedience of a Christian community these great Councils were, none can question who have lifted the veil of their inner history. The standing miracle under Christianity is that it survives its advocates and its agencies in every age. It is a spirit, and it escapes ever into new forms, while men are making the old ones hateful to the instinct and the conscience of mankind. But that the Church should have survived its Councils is the wonder of wonders; for their records abound in the manifestation of every spirit which Christianity denounces, and are conspicuous for the absence of every gracious quality which Christ exhibits and the Gospel commends. Still, underneath all the terrible vanity, selfishness, worldliness, and fraud which disfigure their visible aspects, there is that in all the great Councils which has impressiveness and power. There is a wonderful discernment of the true line of Christian thought in the various profound and difficult questions which were successively submitted to their judgment; nor can we refuse to see in their history some manifestation of the continued presence and action of that Spirit of wisdom, by whom in old time holy men of God were moved to utterance; and who, in the assembly at Jerusalem, saved the unity and established the liberty of the Church.

Four great Councils alone are even partially worthy

to be called Œcumenical, and may claim, though in qualified measure, to represent the whole Christian world. Of these it is sufficient to observe, as bearing on the question of Papal Infallibility, that not only is there no hint of it to be discerned in the discussions or decisions of the Councils, but their perfectly authenticated history is palpably inconsistent with the existence of such an idea. In none of them did the Roman Church assume even the faintest likeness of supremacy. None of them were summoned by the Roman bishop. The Emperor, the secular head of the Roman world, claimed and exercised the right of assembling them. At Nicæa (A.D. 325), which was summoned by Constantine, Constantine himself presided—if it had any president, which is doubtful. The Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381) was summoned by the Emperor Theodosius, and the Roman Church was not even represented there. The Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) was summoned by the younger Theodosius, and Leo I. sent his legates there, though he knew that Cyril of Alexandria had been placed by the Emperor at its head. The Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) was assembled by the Emperor Marcian; and there, while the Papal legates presided, the epistle of the Roman bishop was examined and adopted, Leo himself, a man of powerful character and high pretension, confessing that it could not become a rule of faith with regard to the matter in dispute until it had been adopted as such by the bishops of the Church. Still, at Chalcedon the Roman pretension began to take at any rate a rudimental form, though how far it

was from being the creed of the Roman Church itself is made curiously manifest by the statement of the Pope, Pelagius I. (555-60), that "St. Augustine is to be commended for being mindful of the divine doctrine, which places the foundation of the Church in the apostolical sees, and for teaching that they are schismatics who separate themselves from the communion of these apostolical sees." So far was the dogma, even in the sixth century, from being entertained, or at any rate adopted, at Rome.

But the idea that there was infallibility somewhere was very strongly entertained through all these ages. Men believed that certainty was attainable through some decisive dogmatic utterance of the mind of the Spirit; and there can be no doubt that the celebrated dictum of St. Vincent of Lerins, who wrote in the first half of the fifth century on the means of determining the true Christian doctrine, expresses the idea to which the mind of Christendom had at that time attained. *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, is his criterion. It is the formula of the Infallibility of the Church—the whole body of the faithful at any time existing in the world. And there is something in this idea which is not without its truth. We may not dismiss it summarily as an idol of the imagination, though it easily becomes an idol in the forms which it has been made to assume. It rests on the explicit and most precious assurance of Christ—"Lo, I am with you always." "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things." "Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all

truth." There abides in the Church, and in all true Christian hearts, a profound belief that the indwelling Spirit is maintaining the truth in the believer and in the community ; and that if the essence of the belief of the whole body of the faithful in whom the Spirit dwells could in any age be expressed, it would be the truth as it is in Jesus which would be disclosed. And so far we can recognize a truth in the idea, and rejoice in it. The faith cannot perish out of the whole Catholic Church.

But the essential weakness of the mediæval idea of the Infallibility of the Church lies here. In the first place, it assumes that the mind of the Spirit can be expressed perfectly in dogmatic forms cognizable by man's understanding ; and, in the second place, it overlooks the miserable imperfection and insufficiency of the organ by which it is supposed to utter itself to the world. The first point is of large importance. I shall recur to it in a future chapter. I only note here the confusion between the truth and dogmas which may be formulated into verbal creeds, which vitiates the whole mediæval conception of the doctrine of the Infallible ; though it stimulated an intellectual activity in doctrinal matters which in other ways was of the highest service to the culture and development of mankind. The second flaw in the argument is also of exceeding gravity. It is one thing to believe that the mind of the Spirit is manifested in the sum of Christian thinking and living ; it is another to believe that such an assembly as a General Council, as General Councils appear in history, can do anything but

darken God's counsel, and hinder the progress of God's work in the world. Realize what is meant by the mind of Christ, and then turn to the records of even the most honest and harmonious Councils : you feel that you have passed into a new and an inferior world. We read the narratives of the Council which is now in session. We find that the ablest, most thoughtful, and most honest members denounce it, and threaten to leave it, shaking off the dust of their feet as a testimony against it, because of the tricks, the frauds, the lies, the cajoleries, the threats, the violence, which destroy its freedom, and make it more like the latrocinium of Ephesus than an assembly of the episcopal saints of God. I may venture to say, within the strict limits of historic truth, that all the sad features of the Vatican Council are to be seen in darker, sadder forms in the records of all the general assemblies of the Church.

To hope that through such an organ the Spirit of truth, purity, gentleness, and charity can utter Himself as by His chosen oracle, to believe that such an assembly is the most heaven-like thing which earth holds on its breast, is the very madness of credulity. The confusion of the truth with the dogmas of the Church, and of the manifestation of the Spirit with such an unholy organ as a General Council has never failed to prove itself to be, is the very principle of Babel. It was the mediæval Antichrist, before the full and fatal development of Rome. And nothing can be idler than to suppose that the voice of a Council is the voice of its individual members. As well imagine that the elect of

a popular constituency is the beloved and chosen of each individual elector's heart. In all popular assemblies a few able men rule with absolute mastery; and the voice of the Spirit in an ecclesiastical council is simply the judgment of the acutest, the cleverest, perhaps the most unscrupulous and shameless, doctors of the Christian world. Still, under all, we cannot refuse to recognize a guidance. In some dim way, needing much elucidation and much correction, the great forms of Christian doctrine have been passed safely through the test-house of the Councils, and have been stamped for current use in the wider assembly and Council of the Church, whose meetings one eye only beholds, whose judgments one hand only records.

The mediæval idea of the Infallible, then, was not wholly without substantial basis. *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, if it could be discovered with anything like completeness, would present a fair image of the true Catholic faith. Where it failed was in the exaggerated estimate of the organ by which this universal belief was to be brought to light, and an utter misconception of the form which it was to be expected to assume. A doctrinal creed, full inevitably of logical subtleties, defined by a Council as certainly full of worldliness, selfishness, and pride, sustains precisely the same relation to the holy Catholic faith as an idol sustains to the Lord. But it is to be noted that the Church was very far from blind to this. Some clear notion of the possibility that even Œcumenical Councils

might fail to express the mind of the Church, and that creeds might formulate it imperfectly, possessed the wisest Catholic theologians; and the doctrine of the ablest writers on the subject was, and is, that the decrees of a General Council need, for their full validity, to be accepted by the Church. Thus the matter was left wisely subject to an indefinite, impalpable, and irresponsible authority. It was always open to acute minds to raise the question of the universal acceptance of a decree. In other words, the Christian mind of Europe shrank from the attempt to settle absolutely and without appeal, in sharp, hard lines, like the words of a single voice, what was the form of the truth of God. There was much talk about infallible guidance, much yearning for it, much belief in it, but a very wise hesitancy in determining absolutely and finally where it lay. Certainly during the earlier and formative ages of the Church, there was no sort of belief that the authoritative guidance was to be found in the formal decisions and utterances of the Bishop of Rome.

Only very slowly the idea of what is called Peter's primacy developed itself in the Church. It is interesting and important from the controversial point of view, though it is by no means the ground which we are here seeking to occupy, that "the Fathers" are unanimously silent about it. Not one of them interprets the celebrated passage, Matthew xvi. 18, in the Roman sense. Gregory the Great, who closes the line, writing at the end of the sixth century, disclaims with horror, in a well-known passage,

the title and authority which the Popes have since assumed; to him it appears rank blasphemy. Now, the Council of Trent, the Great Roman Council, held when the Catholic Church had become definitely *Roman* Catholic, decrees that the clergy should vow never to interpret Holy Scripture otherwise than in accord with the unanimous consent of the Fathers—that is, of the great Church writers of the first six centuries, Gregory the Great closing the line. So that we may say that the bishops who are assembled at Rome simply forswear themselves, in being persuaded to accept and to give effect in their teachings to the dogma of the Infallibility of the Papal See, and the system of scriptural interpretation on which it rests. They must either rebel or be forsworn.

But still here is the dogma in the ascendant. In spite of the ignorance of the mediæval Church of the claim, or even of the possibility of such a claim, there has been for some centuries a manifest pressure of the opinion of the Church towards it. It has been distinctly put forward by theologians of reputation; it has cropped out in ecclesiastical controversies; it has been toyed with and finally adopted by the Papal See; and at length Catholic opinion has been supposed to be so ripe for its definition, that a Council has been summoned to proclaim it as a dogma of the faith to the whole Christian world. That it has been adopted by the Council by an immense majority shows plainly that the Papal See had some substantial ground for its belief that the day of definition had come; while

the fact that almost every name of weight in the Assembly was in the minority against it, simply reveals the completeness of that schism between the Papacy and modern thought which is one of the chief pivots of the movement of society. But there are able, learned, and farsighted men in the majority; and they have not been the weakest and most unlearned men in Europe who for the last three hundred years have devoted themselves to the enlargement of the prerogative and the power of the Roman Church. It is a matter of interest to inquire how this opinion has grown into a dogma, what influences have nursed it, and what reasons can explain the fact that acute and able minds see in a principle which appears to us so monstrous, the only hope of salvation for the Church and for society.

There are three considerations which may throw some light on these difficult and momentous questions, and may help us to see how a certain line of Church development has come to a head in such a marvellous dogma as this.

1. In the first place, it must be remembered that the Catholic doctrine of the Infallibility of the Church has always been vague, impalpable, intangible, and for practical purposes wellnigh useless. The controversy which is raging now as to what the Church has always believed and taught upon a vital question, the array of learned and influential names which can be paraded on the one side or the other, shows plainly that the teaching of the Church, like our own law, is pretty much what the judges of

the day choose to make it. And yet the idea of an infallible Church has been exalted in Christendom, and men have been for ages sedulously trained to accept and rest upon authoritative statements of truth. "Hear the Church," has been the Catholic cry through all the ages; and men have been so trained under it that they have lost the habit of thinking for themselves, and the hope that truth would reward their private and individual quest. But the voice of the Church gives an uncertain sound. Tradition is so large and manifold that only the most learned doctors can fairly discern its dicta. The many momentous questions which modern culture has brought before men's minds, and pressed on their attention, get little light from even the most learned conspectus of the opinions of the ancients; and those who really sought to rest on the authority of the Church found themselves generation by generation more completely at sea.

There seem to be but two ways out of the difficulty, which year by year has been a growing one. A perplexed mind might find an exodus through the Protestant doctrine, not of the right only, but of the duty of personal judgment about spiritual truth; or, having no hope of help in that direction, might seek some more explicit and direct guidance from the Church. The very vagueness of the mediæval doctrine, which was an element in it of truth and power, seemed to necessitate for those trained to rest upon it some more definitive and authoritative utterance. As the horizon of

truth widened, and the horizon of doubts and questions widened with it, it was inevitable, it seems to us, that the infallibility of the Church should take the form of the infallibility of some definite organ, through which the Spirit supposed to dwell in and speak by the Church might express Himself methodically to the world. Thus the idea of the infallibility of the ruling See in Christendom seems to grow naturally in time out of the ideas of Infallibility which the Church has sedulously taught. In the keen conflict of opinion, the authoritative utterances which can be paraded on either side of every important question, the word of a living voice will seem like a deliverance to many a perplexed and burdened heart.

2. But the dogma may further be regarded as the inevitable result and completion of that development or decadence of Catholic Christendom, which has for ages been steadily but mightily increasing the authority and influence of the Roman Church. How the Catholic Church has grown into the Roman Church we cannot here attempt, save in briefest outline, to trace. The roots of the movement must be sought far back in the early history of the Christian world. Originally, the primacy of the Roman See was neither a base thing, nor, for the times, an evil thing. Gregory the Great laid the broadest and firmest foundation for it by noble, farsighted, self-denying missionary work. The English Church which he founded, and to which he was true Papa, Father, and the German Church which the English missionaries founded, and

placed deliberately, and with high purpose—whether wisely or not we cannot now stay to question—under the primacy of Rome, reacted with immense force on the position of the Roman Church which founded them. There must be sought the true, deep, and noble foundation of Roman dominion over the West. But “*O si sic omnia.*” The influence thus established grew to supremacy by far other means.

In the first place, there was a kind of political necessity that the thing should grow. In the confusion of secular society, the repeated dissolutions and reconstructions which mark the eras of those stormy ages, it was natural, nay essential, that the spiritual society which professed itself unchangeable should settle itself on some firm and powerful centre, and organize itself with a compactness and strength which would contrast strongly with the disorder which reigned in the temporal sphere. That centre could be found only at Rome. The position of Rome, her history, the legacy of the past which she administered, made it matter of certainty that her preponderating influence would grow into empire. As the hierarchical order of the Church developed itself, the natural head of that hierarchy revealed itself at Rome. The clergy had a hard struggle for prerogatives which they believed to be of vital importance to Christendom, with the secular powers; and they gladly fell back on the Papacy for support. The policy of the Roman See in isolating the clergy from national associations and influences, which was completely successful under Gregory VII., consolidated the Papal kingdom; and by

attaching to it a vast and powerful body of adherents in every European country, who had absolutely no other support, secured both the extension and the permanence of its sway.

But, practically, the chief instrument of its aggrandisement, the visible ground of the pretensions which are now sealed with the *placet* of the Council, is to be found in a series of the most shameless and reckless forgeries which are recorded in history. The nature of those forgeries has been laid bare with such ruthless severity in the works to which I have referred, and which are in everybody's hands, that I do not dwell upon them here. They are multiform, and stretch through centuries; in fact, a complete manufactory of pious forgeries, the main object of which was to trace back new assumptions of authority to the earliest ages of the Papacy, was established under the auspices of the Roman Church. It would not be fair to trace the Isidorian forgeries to the suggestion of the Roman bishop; but most certainly Pope Nicholas made himself accessory after the fact in the most unblushing manner, and seems to us to merit a somewhat sharper treatment than he has received at the hands of the Catholic theologians to whom we have referred. On these apparently authentic documents—and the detection of the forgery, though it was clumsy enough, was utterly beyond the critical sagacity of those times—Rome built up her system of autocracy, which the vote of the Council has now made complete. But the tendencies of the times were working mightily with these forgers, or they

had never been strong enough to build up the structure of the Papacy. Age by age the free life of the Church has been drawn in and absorbed by the Roman See. The development of the Church has been distinctly, and, remembering the ideas which have ruled in the Church, it seems to us inevitably, in this direction. It appears also to be a natural evolution, that the independent idea of the Infallibility of the Church should yield to the universal tendency, and that Infallibility should ultimately centre itself at Rome.

3. The third and altogether the strongest reason for the definition of the dogma will be found in the special characteristics and tendencies of the times.

It is strange, most strange, that this latter half of the nineteenth century—the era of intelligence, liberty, and progress, of railroads, steam ships, electric telegraphs, and journalism—should witness the proclamation, that an infallible voice, the direct and explicit utterance of the God who rules the world, is to be heard on all vital subjects from the lips of an old man at Rome. The allegation of the Papal champions, of course, is that this has always been the Catholic creed. The chief expositor of the dogma declares triumphantly that it has never been called in question in Church literature until quite recent times. For precisely the same reason, we imagine, there is no protest against the infallibility of the Primate of all England in Anglican ecclesiastical literature, the idea never having been present to any mind to be denounced or disproved. It is in these recent ages that the thing has been

presented to the mind of Christendom, at first in vague and shadowy, but afterwards in more definite and substantial forms; until at length, after fierce discussion, it has been proclaimed as a dogma of the faith to the whole Catholic world. And it seems still, in spite of all that has transpired at Rome, simply incredible that a great body of teachers and pastors of the Church should take their way from all parts of the habitable world to Rome, to agree to the declaration that henceforth a feeble, and it may be a very foolish and short-sighted mortal, shall be held by all the faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus to speak on all matters which concern the Church and its relation to the secular life of men, the infallible words of God. It is a wonderful sight; surely the most wonderful sight of this century, of all centuries, if we could persuade ourselves that it means much that is real, either to those who promulgate, or to those who accept it. It is the secret feeling that its scope cannot be wide, that its influence cannot be deep, in such an age as this, which enables men to hear of the definition so calmly, and to greet it so constantly with a shrug or a smile.

But still there is the definition an accomplished fact; to understand the reason of it, we must glance at the characteristic features of our times.

It seems to me that we shall fail to grasp the real meaning and bearings of this Œcumenical Council if we concentrate our attention on the Infallibility of the Papal See. A great section of the Roman Catholic world is resolved to declare the Pope

infallible. Why? That is the question which we have to answer; and the answer is to be found in the ideas which the Syllabus of Errors sets forth and expounds. The whole practical interest of the question lies there.

It was understood when the Council was first summoned that it had a threefold object:

1. To define the dogma of the bodily assumption of the Virgin.
2. To endorse the anathemas on modern civilisation, on all which we in England are wont to associate with the progress of society, which the Pope put forth in the form of a Syllabus of Errors five years ago.
3. To define the dogma of the Infallibility of the Pope.

Now we may consider it certain that no considerable company of Roman prelates would have given themselves the trouble of a winter's journey to Rome to affirm the belief of the faithful that the Virgin Mary was borne up bodily to heaven. But such points as these are the only matters of faith which remain for definition. The great doctrines, and all possible minor doctrines which grow round them, down to the finest shades of meaning which words will bear, have been settled long ago. There is no desire in any ruling party in the Roman Church to attempt a revision of the Catholic creeds. The Catholic faith, as held by the Roman Church, is not a matter which can be modified, enlarged, or corrected, like the creed of a Congregational Union. The great body of doctrine is fixed in its complete-

ness, and must remain substantially what it is while the Papacy endures. At least there is nothing in the movement which has issued in the Vatican Council which even suggests what may be possible in the way of doctrinal as well as ecclesiastical reform, should a man of genius ever again occupy the Papal throne. In that case the dogma of Infallibility will undergo some strange and searching tests. But no reformation of the creed or the ecclesiastical order of Christendom was in the minds of the leaders, or any considerable section of the members, of this last Œcumenical Council of the Church. The Ultramontane party had no such vision, and those whom such a vision might have crossed, would never have dreamed of the Council as the instrument for the accomplishment of the work.

It is impossible not to connect the Council with that dark and resolute opposition to what are called modern ideas, which has inspired the influence of the Society of Jesus on the Church and on the world since the era of its establishment. In truth it is their *raison d'être*. Their influence on the deliberations which led to the summoning of the Council, on its objects, and on the conduct of its business, is acknowledged on all hands to have been supreme. It is distinctly their movement, and we must believe that its object is the establishment of their ideas. We must place ourselves at their standing point to understand how the matter appears to the astute and able men who have the conduct of the movement; perhaps we may see that from their point of view it is by no means so foolish and

suicidal as it appears from ours. We are tempted to smile at the garrulous and obstinate old man, who seems to us, by claiming Divine attributes, to be putting himself in such days as these to an open shame. It seems almost an act of that madness which precedes perdition. But able and politic brains have been at work on this scheme, and we may be sure that they have some deep reason for it. They do not propose to break with the liberal movement in their own Church from wantonness or revenge. It is part of a profound and consistent scheme of policy, which those who have taken it in hand will work out to its full results.

The liberal spirit in the Church has been the chronic difficulty of Rome. Intellect she has had abundantly at her disposal; but intellect working with some measure of freedom, and inspired by conscience, has always been the deadliest enemy of the Roman See. The struggle of the Church, speaking through its liberal scholars and secular leaders, against the Papacy, has been a vital movement in European history since the Papacy grasped at supremacy. These are not days in which the liberal movement is likely to lose aim and force. What was deadly to Papal domination in past generations must be deadlier now, inasmuch as it has acquired a new intensity. The advocates and counsellors of the Roman See know full well whither liberal Catholicism tends. It is steadily undermining the very foundations of the Papal kingdom, as in political communities liberal ideas inevitably in the end bring all despotism to the dust. There is not the faintest

hope that the Papacy in its present form could survive the spread of liberal Catholicism. A man like Montalembert lends a glow of splendour by his genius to the system which he upholds. But it is a sure instinct which warns the champions of the Papacy that the spread of his ideas would destroy the whole economy of the Papal Church. Liberal Catholicism means the interests of the Church as against those of the Church of Rome; and there is a powerful party in that Church which regards the supremacy of the Pope as the keystone of the Christian system. This party may be just as honest, and just as blind, as those who in England identify the interests of Christianity with the maintenance of the Established Church.

Precisely the same spirit is working in Roman and Protestant Christendom, and to the same ends. The institutions which have appeared for ages to be the bulwarks of the truth are threatened by the spread of this free spirit with overthrow; and a vague, unsubstantial thing called the spirit of progress is all that seems to offer itself to anxious and distrustful eyes in its room. It is not to be wondered at that those whose ideas of the work of Christian truth in the world cannot travel beyond the maintenance of venerable institutions, resist this free spirit with desperate pertinacity, and regard its overthrow as synonymous with the triumph of Christ's kingdom among men. A very powerful party in the Church has settled in its own mind that the Papacy in any vigorous form cannot consist with liberal Catholicism. They see the power of the

movement; they watch anxiously the rapidity of its progress; they are sure that for the Papacy to wait and watch it would be suicidal, and they have resolved to strangle it within the bosom of their Church.

It is a very intelligible, and from their point of view a very natural policy; and more than that, it is the only possible policy, if the interests of the truth are coincident with the maintenance of the system of the Roman Church. From their point of view the Pope and the Curialists are perfectly right. To take any other course than that which is marked out in the Syllabus, which the dogma of Infallibility is to stamp with the sanction of heaven, would be to give up the Church to the spoiler, and to suffer the only bulwarks against the infidel which they believe in to be overthrown. Such a battle as Archdeacon Denison is fighting in England against the spirit of the times, the Papal party is fighting under other conditions and on a wider theatre in the Vatican Council, and let us believe to a large extent with entire sincerity. The liberal spirit is essentially a spirit of reformation. The first thing to be reformed—it has been the cry of the reformers in all ages, even of the most saintly doctors of the Church*—is the Papal despotism. The centre and core of all that needs reformation in the Church is at Rome. It cannot be matter of wonder that those who hold the Roman system as it stands to be the ægis of the faith, have set themselves to resist the liberal move-

* See the Letters of St. Bernard to Eugenius, and his last treatise.

ment sternly, as they would fight against death. This, we imagine, is the key to the bitter animosity with which even faint utterances of liberal thought have been persecuted in the Council by the Papal advocates, and by the great body of the bishops, who hold directly of the Pope, and are simply reflectors of his ideas. There is a sure instinct in the heart of the Holy Father which warns him, and most justly, that the German spirit is fatal to his position, and that if it be allowed to influence the policy of the Church, the first thing which it will assail will be the sacred privileges and prerogatives of Rome. So *delenda est* is the sentence; either Rome or it must fall.

But we shall wholly fail to appreciate the significance of this movement if we confine our contemplation to clerical tactics in the high places of the Roman Church. In some sense this is a popular movement. There is a great body of public opinion behind it; ignorant, bigoted, no doubt, but still powerful. The prelates who have conducted the enterprise are not conscious of having cut themselves off from all sympathy in their own communion. Popular and influential journals support it. It satisfies a want, it fulfils an aspiration of a certain section of the popular mind in Europe, the dull weight and strength of which we Protestants, among whom rationalism in the higher sense has had free course, are prone greatly to underrate. There is a very large class in Europe which is deeply dissatisfied with our modern civilisation, and is profoundly perplexed and bewildered by the problems which it

raises. It doubts grievously of it, whereunto it may grow. These doubters and tremblers are startled by the rapid progress of what to them are revolutionary ideas. They do not believe in popular government, they do not believe in our modern liberty, in letting every one say what he likes and do what he likes within wide limits of law; they dread the increase of education without authority to guide the process; they dread toleration as likely to play into the hands of the sceptics and atheists at last. A vague feeling has been awakened, in by no means the weakest young minds of our generation, that the true form of government is paternal; that what is wanted supremely amidst all our confusion is some strong hand, if it could be found, to put things right, and to keep them right, and be the regent in the lower sphere of the Supreme.

How far Mr. Carlyle has nursed these ideas by his bitterly scornful criticism on the elements of our modern liberalism, quite as ruthless as the Pope's, and by that reverence for the strong regulating hand, even if it be somewhat brutal, which his writings, and especially the most recent, inculcate, it is premature to decide. When his whole influence on our generation comes to be estimated, it will be an important element in the account. Mr. Ruskin, another of our rare men of genius, is much in the same strain. All around us is as wrong, in their judgment, as was society in Jerusalem to Isaiah in his days. And these, our prophets, write with a point and a power which it is difficult to resist. They have enough truth to show on their side to perplex and sadden

the wisest, and to make the less wise very hopeless. And this, among the weaker and less disciplined of the community, is a state of mind very open to the attraction of Rome.

She professes that she represents another principle of order, an order under spiritual authority and spiritual laws; and the very name has its fascination. Men believe vaguely that the true principle of order in the world is the reign of Christ. Disappointed, disheartened, by the confusion of society, they are tempted to look with hope to that which offers itself in His name. Rome recalls the ages of faith, when none of these modern innovations were heard of; and when, she says, life had a simplicity, a purity, an integrity, which our civilisation has utterly destroyed. Rome is bent on rallying the party which is oppressed by the sense of the confusion of the times, and which longs for the restoration of that which in the purple transfiguring mists of the past seems so fair. Rome seems bent on reorganizing herself on this basis; on constituting herself the representative and the guardian of an old order, an old idea, an old life, free from all modern contaminations. And, again, we express our conviction that it is her only policy; every other course is but awaiting the approaching doomsman's stroke. There may be possibly a splendid career, though a brief one, open to the Papacy under a Pope of genius, who shall be at the same time a believer in modern civilisation. Pio Nono and the Jesuits who inspire him have no such vision. To them it is a damnable heresy to believe that such

a career is even possible. The Syllabus closes with the words, "They are in damnable error who hold that the Roman Pontiff can or ought to reconcile himself with progress, with liberalism, and with modern civilisation." The leaders of this movement are resolved to make their Church the Church of those who protest against the principles of the Revolution; and they are content to wait till what they call the revolutionary storm which is sweeping over Europe has spent itself, and the world wakes up to believe in the paternal rule of the Vicar of God once more.

We may very easily underrate the strength of the reactionary party in Europe, who hate the whole course of things since '89, and believe it to be of the devil. The policy of the French empire, the revelation of what Cæsarism means—Cæsarism which wears the cloak of the Revolution, and invokes its name—has greatly strengthened it. And with this party, be it weak or strong, the Papacy has cast in its lot. The Council has been called mainly to add to the anathemas which the Pope has fulminated against everything which liberal Europe believes in, the awful sanction of the Divine name. The Ultramontanes are resolved to erect this antagonism to the spirit which is sapping with terrible rapidity the foundations of their Church, into a dogma of the faith; and to bring all the battery of influence which they wield with such tremendous force to bear upon the faithful, to lodge this dogma in their consciences and their hearts.

It is a policy which has much to commend it to

worldly wisdom. It will contract their Church, but it will give it a definite basis, and a firm purpose. There will then be a clear, authoritative voice uttering its decisions on all questions of morality, of duty, of policy, which agitate—nay, torment—this scrutinizing and sceptical generation. The voice of the Pope is to be to the bewildered, restless nations as the voice of the living God, to comfort them and to give them peace. This is what Pio Nono means by this marvellous dogma; this is what Dr. Manning means. The clear definition of it, and its imposition on the conscience of Christendom, may be the means of bringing out what heaven means in the swiftest and most decisive way.

There is another point of view from which it seems natural, and in a sense necessary, that the attempt to define the dogma should have been made. We may regard the Council, together with the Syllabus, which cannot be disassociated from it, as an attempt to widen the range of the principle of authority, infallible authoritative guidance, so as to take in, not the dogmas of faith only, but the practical duties and relations of life. The Pope would have the faithful look to him for instruction, not only as to what they are to believe, but as to what they are to do. And we can see how this course is in a measure forced on those who believe as the Pope believes about his position and duties, by the rapidly changing conditions of the times. The centre of gravity of the Church has changed entirely during the last generation. By the centre of gravity I mean the things about which it chiefly

cares, around which are centred the interests of its life. A generation ago the dogmas of the faith were the supreme matters of interest in every Church. Doctrinal points were discussed with a keen interest which they quite fail to awaken now. Questions of heresy were uppermost in religious controversies, and a flaw in the pronunciation of the Shibboleth was the death-blow to confidence, even in the most enlightened sections of the Church. Now, the supreme interest is transferred to questions which bear on life, and on the position and work of Christianity in the world. These are the matters about which all earnest spiritual men are thinking and talking everywhere.

And it is the same in every communion. In the Roman Church the dogmas of the faith are settled. No great party cares to stir again the old doctrinal discussions. They rather want to know the word which the Gospel has to speak to men laden with the burdens, struggling with the difficulties, and perplexed by the tendencies, of such an age as this. What are we to think of this spirit of free inquiry which is pushing its questions into every sphere, and threatens a revolution in every province of our knowledge? This scepticism, which is shaking the very foundations of belief, is it unto death or unto life? These manifold and complicated social problems, this democratic spirit, this pushing, go-ahead temper, this growing luxury, this mass of poverty, this assertion of the rights of man, of woman—women in the professions, at the polling-booth, in Parliament,—this shaking of the ancient order and

settled institutions of society, what has the Gospel to say to it? Can it place itself at the head of this modern progress, or does reason pass to the van, while Revelation shrinks back to the rear of the advance of mankind? These are questions which are pressing with tremendous force on men in all classes, all creeds; and can any Church profess that it sees and can explain the answer? Are not all Churches in the same dire perplexity, doubting whether they shall be borne on, or shattered by the swelling and surging tide? The people lack guidance everywhere. There seems to have fallen on all spiritual orders and organs a hopeless incapacity to deal with these dark problems of our modern life. Those especially who have looked at life and the world mainly from the theological point of view, are filled with something like horror when the scientific discoveries of the age force themselves before their sight. It seems as if all that they hold dear, all that makes life worth the living, were slipping away from them, and that knowledge would triumph over the wreck of hope. Now, while this confusion and perplexity reign, and men's hearts are everywhere failing them for fear, does it not seem that a Church which makes such tremendous pretensions as the Papal, is bound to have authoritative answers to such questions, or to abdicate its assumed function as the divinely ordained teacher and ruler of men?

The truth is that the flock of St. Peter is at present shepherdless. It has wandered out of the old doctrinal fields of interest, where all was firmly

fenced and clearly defined, and now in the new region of its interests and duties it finds itself practically helpless. The shepherd who was wont to lead has lost the power. The Church for years past—and years now stand for almost as much as generations stood for a century ago—has been almost dumb upon the questions which have really occupied the minds and troubled the hearts of men. The sheep have wandered hither and thither in devious paths, multitudes passing through rationalism to practical atheism, while the shepherd has been struggling on wearily behind.

Surely this movement must be regarded as an earnest and resolute attempt of the visible head of the Roman Church to place himself actually at the head once more. He now assumes and exercises the power to tell the faithful precisely what they are to think on all these matters, and how they are to act in all these dilemmas. There is nothing which has to do with the public life of Christendom which is overlooked. On every point which is perplexing men the Pope has his clear and trenchant utterance. No soul under the care of the Chief Pastor of Roman Christendom can be in doubt for a moment as to what he is bound to think and to do in this modern life; that is, if he is willing to rely implicitly on the authority which is really the foundation on which the whole visible structure of his life as a Roman Catholic Christian is edified.

It appears to me, I confess, that some such movement of the Roman Church was inevitable in the changed and changing conditions of our modern

life; unless its Chief Pontiff was prepared to see the whole current of thought and action slipping away from him, and himself left helpless, stranded on the shore. To many of us another image will better express the reality of the situation. The old man has set his throne on the shore of a surging advancing sea. He bids it stay its proud waves at his feet. If the tide of thought, energy, and life which is sweeping grandly onward obeys him, we too must bow down and worship the present God. But if it rages and foams around the obstacle that bars its progress, and threatens to toss both the throne and its ruler on its angry flood, we watch with interest while those who care for him, and would save the wreck of his authority, lift him and set him on a safer shore.

It is a question whether we as Protestants should deprecate or rejoice in the extreme policy, which the decision of the Council has crowned with at any rate a formal success. There is a natural disposition in parties to exult when their adversaries stultify themselves by adopting extreme and impracticable views. But it may be doubted whether all such triumphs are not costly in the end. The whole community loses when any powerful section of it forgets moderation, and suffers itself to be driven to excess. It is quite possible that many very earnest and thorough Protestants may grieve over this Ultramontane frenzy as a public detriment to Christendom, and may hold that Dr. Newman rather than Dr. Manning represents the wise policy of the Church. The true points to be considered are, how far this dogma is

really latent in the Roman system, and how far the special conditions of these times tend naturally to develop it. If, as we endeavoured to show, it really underlies the whole Roman system, and has been naturally and inevitably brought out into prominence by the characteristic tendencies of our age, the definition of the dogma will minister, though in ways that Rome little anticipates, to the true progress of society. It is well that this principle of authority, whose true basis is infallibility, should be developed to its utmost limit, and applied with all possible force. In spiritual matters it must either have all weight or none. It might be well for the world that it should be tried on a far ampler scale and with more perfect adjustment than under present conditions is possible. The numerical strength of the minority, and their overwhelming moral preponderance, render the definition almost nugatory. The only result of pressing it would be a formal rupture of the Roman Church.

But what have the Liberal party to substitute in its room? The Church—a vague entity, a speechless, handless guide. If the principle of authority be worth anything in spiritual things, one would think it was bound to offer very definite guidance to such a perplexed and bewildered age as this. All the old lines of definition are being obliterated, all the old landmarks are disappearing; new ideas, new aims, new claims, are abroad. Men, broken loose from their old moorings, are drifting wildly; they know not what to think, to believe, or to do. There is a Babel of voices all round us, and it needs

a disciplined intellect and wide knowledge to find the way through the endless discussions and conflicting theories of the time. Never was there a generation when quiet men, who feel themselves quite unequal to a high intellectual strain, might look more confidently for an authoritative word, to tell them with the decision of a Divine voice what they are to do. If there be such a voice on this earth, now let it speak, or be for ever silent; for never was it more sorely needed by those who shrink from the strain of the quest of truth. If there is one on the earth who, in Dr. Manning's words, "is the supreme judge and director of the consciences of men—of the peasant that tills the fields and the prince that sits on the throne; of the household that lives in the shade of privacy, and the legislature that makes laws for kingdoms, and is the last sole and supreme judge of what is right and wrong," he was never more desperately wanted by the faithful of his fold than now. And if each morning he is moved to utter a new infallible dictum, and to feed his flock with fresh bread of truth day by day, there are those in the Roman Church who will rejoice in the supply of the daily manna, and magnify the bountiful hand which provides them such an abundant store. Hear Father Gallwey, S. J.: "And even if the exaggerated foreboding should have its fulfilment, so that the time should come when we might expect some new definition every morning, yet so long as the watchful providence of God is pledged not to suffer any false oracle to emanate from the Apostolic See, such daily pronouncements, so far from being an

evil, would be like the daily provision of manna." ("St. Joseph and the Vatican Council," by Father Gallwey, S.J., p. 17.) Here is a new cosmical power in the world,—a power which can settle what is true, right, wise, and desirable; and terminate all the controversies which have afflicted mankind. By all means let it act, we are tempted to say, and soon. If it be a power, the one panacea for all the evils of society would be to return to the Papal fold, and put our education, our political, social, and domestic life, under the regulating hand of the Papal priests. We have the electric wires which can keep the timepieces of a whole country, of a whole continent, in complete accord. We have storm signals each morning from all parts of Europe. It ought to be possible, under this new order of things, to regulate from one common centre the social and political movements of the world. And this, the Pope thinks, would be our "Paradise Regained."

The experiment is so momentous, and seems to such a large party in Europe to be not only feasible but hopeful, that it might be well if it were possible that Catholic society should be reconstructed on the basis of the Syllabus, that the world might watch and profit by the result. The idea of infallibility is lurking in secret places in the Roman system, and it poisons all its springs of thought. It is a ghost of the mediæval Church which is still haunting us. It is time that it was either laid for ever, or accepted formally as a supernatural guidance from the celestial world.

The views of the liberal Catholics seem to be

just as strong a treason against the Spirit in one way, as this Papal dogma is in another. Thorough freedom they dread quite as strongly as the Jesuits. They have their narrow circle in which free Christian thought is to be trained to move. The Pope and the Curialists have another. "But where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The Gospel claims deliverance from both of them. The swiftest way to the deliverance would probably be through the working out of the doctrine of this new dogma of the faith. The question would then soon be settled, and settled for ever, whether such authority as reigns at Rome, guided by the wisdom which inspires the Papal counsels, but makes confusion worse confounded by undertaking the regulation of all human affairs; or whether, the experiment being successful, and society being reconstructed by the Roman priest from the very foundations, we are to repeat the awful blasphemy of the days of Papal supremacy, and sit henceforth as docile disciples at the feet of our Lord God the Pope.

III.

THE INFALLIBLE BOOK.

III.

THE INFALLIBLE BOOK.

“THE Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants,” is a sentence which we Protestants constantly quote to our glory; with eulogies of the “immortal Chillingworth,” more or less judicious. It is perhaps the most popular commonplace of our religious platforms, and it is supposed to set forth the central point of our Protestant creed with singular point and power. It is a sentence which the Romanists as constantly quote against us to our shame. And so far the Romanists are right. They have set up an infallible Church as their idol, and, after the fashion of all idolatries, it is gradually debasing itself. The infallible Church has now narrowed itself to the dimensions of an infallible man. “The Church!—I am the Church!” “Tradition!—I am Tradition!” is the language of Pio Nono; which the Church of Rome by a solemn *placet* has confirmed. There is but one step more to be taken to complete Lamaism in a Christian dress—the recognition of the Popes as the perpetual living incarnation of the Holy Ghost in the world.

We, on the other hand, have set up an infallible Book as the object of our idolatry. We have handled its texts, and its very letters, after a fashion which has denied the inward teaching of the living Spirit, if it has not involved a doubt of the existence of a spirit in man capable of being taught by Him ; while it has hidden from us, as it did from the Pharisees, the living person of the living Lord. Like Pilate, the Jews were ever saying, What is truth ? while the living Truth stood before them. They searched for it in verbal oracles, rather than in the knowledge of Him who is truth, whom the verbal oracles revealed.

“ Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think that ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me.” We read these words as an exhortation. They are really a rebuke, a rebuke not of the search, but of the mind in which the search was made. And this consideration renders nugatory the objection to the indicative sense which some critics of eminence have taken, that *ἐπευνύστε* cannot be well used of a light and frivolous search which might be open to rebuke. Our Lord does not condemn the search—were the object of it but to find Him. It is the kind of searching of the Scriptures, and the kind of use of the Scriptures, which was the habit of the Pharisaic school, and on which they prided themselves no little, which was denounced by the Lord. The religious leaders of those days had come to idolize the written word. The captivity had destroyed their heathen idolatries utterly. It is a remarkable instance of the result of

a special discipline in the character and habits of a people. They came back from their Babylonish bondage in appearance regenerate. The old leaven seemed to have been utterly purged out of them by their sufferings, and they have been free from the tendency to the kind of idolatry to which their ancestors were madly prone, from that day until now. Probably, had we time to go into it, we might find something in the special influences of that great revolution which happened in the East during the time of their captivity, which may partially account for it; but much must be attributed to the direct action of the Divine hand in the chastisement and discipline of their souls. And yet how little after all was really cured. Nothing could be a greater mistake than to suppose that the sufferings of the captivity transformed the whole nation into a spiritual Church, whose fellowship subsisted in a close and constant fellowship with the unseen but ever-present Lord.

Alas! the idolatrous tendency was there, and as strong as ever. It is in us all. Cast out in one form, it enters in another. Debarred one expression, it breaks out in a different one; and it wears so many dresses that it needs keen and disciplined Christian intelligence to recognize the essential form beneath. It is the characteristic human infirmity; and the most shameful forms of it are to be found within the bosom of the Christian Church. In these Jews, the children of the restoration, it simply changed its form. They ceased from idols the work of men's hands, and they have since been distinguished as

a people by their intense abhorrence of all which might even look towards these forms of the sin. Probably the most scornful spectator of the idolatries of Christendom is the Jew, to whose forefathers the grossest forms of idolatry were easily besetting sins. But ceasing from idols in the grosser sense, they set up another, a more dangerous because more subtile and specious idolatry in its room. The words of their law became their idol. They extracted texts from Scripture, and made spiritual charms of them; they nailed them on their door-posts; they wrote them on their walls; they bound them round their brows; they hung them on their garments; and they felt that the very possession of these talismans had virtue. They believed that they had power to charm away all evil—like the Paternoster subsequently in Christendom—and were a pledge to them of all possible good. A Rabbinical sentence is quoted, and it is but characteristic of a multitude, which very pointedly illustrates—perhaps it even gave occasion for—these words of our Lord: “He who acquires the words of the law, gains to himself eternal life.”

Precisely parallel to this, fulfilling the same law, is the history of Buddhism and Mahomedanism. The Buddhist, whose religion first came to man as an emancipation, pores as slavishly over his sacred books, and hopes as abjectly to be saved by his familiarity with their letters; while the Koran serves the same office for the Mahomedan. Whatever spiritual light there might have been in the documents—and there was much in both—has quite

died out of them. Their words, phrases, letters, have become as denuded of any vital meaning as the fossil shells which build our rocks are bare of life. And thus it had happened to the Scriptures in the time of our Lord. His charge against "the Jews" is that they searched the Scripture for the eternal life which they believed to be hidden in its words and phrases, which they tortured to draw it forth; while they were utterly blind to the testimony which it bore to the living Teacher of their spirits, who was revealing Himself to their knowledge by a thousand channels, of which the Scripture was but the clearest and the fullest, and whom to know is eternal life.

The Roman Church holds that we idolize the Bible much in the same way in which it was idolized by the Jews. They say that we regard it as a fixed and final utterance of the whole mind of God, a word rounded and complete, sufficient for all the occasions and exigencies of life. They complain of us that we leave no room for the continual revelation of the mind of God to the Church through the Spirit, whose special function it is, according to the promise, to "guide us into all truth." They hold that the revelation of God must be a continuous revelation, with power of adaptation to new conditions and needs. This appeal to the mere text of a written word for the decision of all controversies, and for the determination of all questions of duty and conduct in the new circumstances and with the new lights which the progress of humanity, its upheaval to a higher

level, brings to bear on life, seems to them to make light of this function of the Spirit, and to deny, practically, the personal influence of Christ on the Church. They say that it is a fixed, formal Christ, a Christ stereotyped in words, which, however deep, rich, and full, can only feebly present that living Being in whom all fulness dwells, whom we take for our Saviour, and not the living Lord who is ever watching the development of humanity, that He may guide it, and afford new wisdom from the perennial fountain to meet new dangers and difficulties as its culture proceeds.

It can hardly be denied that there is much truth in these representations. In much of its complaint of us Rome is right; but we have seen already what a ghastly parody of a living presence Rome in her turn offers to the world. If *we* make an inspired Book our idol, Rome has come to worship a "vain, obstinate"* old man. But our present concern is with the special dangers of our Protestantism, which I think these Roman charges against our system indicate; though it may be well, before proceeding to discuss the subject, to glance for a moment at the Roman view of the Scriptures, and the policy of the Roman Church with regard to the written Word.

One of the pet Protestant charges against the Roman Church is that she suppresses the Scriptures. We complain of her that she has hidden them for ages from the laity in a dead language, and that now,

* The epithets are those employed by one of the ablest of the English Dominicans.

when that policy is no longer possible, she places the Bible in the catalogue of dangerous books, to be kept out of the hands of the laity by all possible means. Here are two distinct charges which are constantly treated as one. At the root of this there is the confusion of the Roman with the Mediæval Church, which might fairly be called Catholic. The policy of the Roman Church in these later ages is one thing, the policy of the Catholic Church during the early and middle ages is another. It is against the Mediæval Church that the charge of keeping the Scriptures buried in a dead language is urged; and there are few popular beliefs more utterly destitute of truth. It is an entire mistake to suppose that the Mediæval Church, as matter of policy, kept the Scriptures from the knowledge of the laity. She would, as a rule, only have been too thankful if they had cared to understand them better. The truth is that the fear of the Bible is comparatively a recent thing in the history of the Papacy, and is mainly a reaction against Protestantism. During the earlier Middle Ages, when the national languages of Western Europe were forming, there was no possibility of any extensive use of vernacular versions. They existed in considerable numbers, especially versions of portions of the Bible. We need only read Cuthbert's touching account of Bæda's death-bed, to see how much in earnest the ablest minds in Europe were about it in the eighth century. But the languages were uncouth and impracticable, and rapidly changed even from generation to genera-

tion; so that the great mass of the people, however well furnished with books, and however desirous to read them, would have found them quite useless in their hands. But the knowledge was more wanting to the people than the desire to translate to the scholars. Read the account which Alfred gives of the state of England as regards learning, as regards the power to make any sort of use of the materials of knowledge, when he came to the throne. Consider the state of France in the tenth century, as you may find it described in any tolerable history, and measure the difficulty of getting any knowledge of the Scriptures into the minds of the peasantry through any independent study of the Word of God. We believe that the actual knowledge of the Bible in those ages is greatly underrated; but the knowledge came through schools, sermons, and oral instruction, rather than through study of written documents, the mere price of which alone placed them entirely beyond the reach of the poor.

And with regard to the Latin language, in which all sacred literature, and literature generally, was mainly written. Till quite recently it was the custom in Europe to write on science and philosophy mainly in Latin, as the common language of the learned in all the European countries—that is, in the civilised world. Would it be fair to represent that custom as an attempt to hide the mysteries of knowledge from the multitude? On the contrary, it was an endeavour to bring them as much as possible under the cognizance of those

who would be able to understand them, and likely to care about them. It was distinctly in the interest of knowledge that the custom was maintained, and only when that end could be gained in a more excellent way, it ceased. Just thus was it with the Bible in the Middle Age. It was in Latin because Latin was the common language, so to speak, of all readers; but those who suppose that the Mediæval Churchmen were afraid to make known the Bible, would be amazed at the number of vernacular versions of at any rate portions of the Bible, at the large and literal quotations from the Bible, and at the endeavours in various ways to make its narrations and doctrines known, which abounded in every country of western Europe, and most especially in our own.

But the time came when the various languages of the West became sufficiently fixed and developed to be capable of literary use. At this crisis, too, came the revival of learning, which was partly due to the new interest in intellectual matters which the growing culture of the times generated in classes before quite indifferent, and partly to political events which scattered accomplished scholars over Europe. Then followed rapidly the invention of the printing press, and the multiplication of copies of the Bible, and of the most valued works of literature, whereby a new state of things was ushered in. Before what is called the revival of learning, the great mass of the laity felt themselves very humbly dependent on the clergy for even the rudiments of religious truth. There was no means

of forming an independent judgment, and consequently little disposition to form one. There was no room for the jealousy which subsequently arose. But when the laity became interested in intellectual pursuits, when copies of the Bible were easily to be obtained, and when a free spirit of inquiry was abroad, the policy of the Roman Church towards the Bible underwent an entire change. Men discovered, without much deep research, that the whole system of the Church found no countenance from the written Word; nay, that it was very plainly opposed both to the spirit and the precept of that Word; and then they began to argue out of their Bibles against the pompous ceremonial, the ecclesiastical tyranny, and the soul-destroying ordinances of Rome. Then it became evident that either the open Bible must be shut again, or the system of the Church must fall. There could be no peace, no truce, between idolatrous Rome and the free study of the Word of God.

Then the Roman Church adopted openly the principle that the Bible is a dangerous book—that is, in uninstructed hands. But we must not misunderstand what Rome means by this. It implies no doubt of the Divine origin of the Bible. On this point Rome has always been orthodox. Further, it implies no doubt of the Divine authority of the Bible; that also Rome holds firmly; only she demands that the true sense of the Word shall be established by the Church. She simply holds that the Bible is dangerous, as a knife is dangerous in the hands of an infant. She stumbles always at

that stumbling-block, the spiritual infancy of the great mass of mankind. She esteems the Bible useful, admirable, in a skilled hand ; but very perilous in an unskilled or trembling one. So that the distrust of Rome is really not distrust of the book, but of those who are to study it. She considers that it needs to be carefully explained to them ; they are to be told what they are to understand by it, and how they are to apply its often perplexing precepts to life ; but that if they read the naked word with only their own naked judgment to help them, they will inevitably go perilously, perhaps fatally, astray.

And it is wonderful how all Churches are, in their various fashions, of the same mind as Rome. The sense of the Bible is wellnigh as much stereotyped in the various Churches of Christendom as in Rome herself. Each has its own tradition of the sense which is to be attached to the passages which afford to it its particular standing-ground ; and those who are nursed in those Churches drink in the traditional sense of the Scripture as the milk of their infant nourishment, and are bound to the traditional sense under sufficiently heavy penalties when they grow up at length and become men.

And there is something not altogether without a basis of truth in all this, which runs through all the Churches, and is the strength of all the creeds. The Bible *is* a difficult book, and does need high intelligence, cultivated spiritual intelligence, to comprehend it. But the needful spiritual intelligence must not be confounded with high intellectual culture ; it belongs to quite another sphere.

In stormy times, the wildest excesses of the fanatics, and the sternest cruelties of religious war, found some text in the Bible to justify what the inmost conscience of humanity condemns. The early history of the Quakers, especially in New England, will afford some curious instances of the difficulties in which a literal application of very plain texts of the Bible would plunge society. Were we to take the literal sense of many a passage from the Bible which readily occurs, were we to refuse to modify the sense of that particular passage by other passages, or by the bearing of the whole Book, we might easily break up the whole framework of our lives, and even, if it were applied on a large scale, the framework of society.

The Roman Church, trembling at the difficulty, filled with "the spirit of fear," as in all her policy, rather than with "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," declares that the Bible needs an authoritative interpreter; one who can bring forth with infallible certainty the truth out of the Word, who can explain doubtful and qualify extreme statements, and teach men not only how to read the precept, but how to apply it to the difficult passages of life. And again I say the Roman Church is right. Man does need such a guide and teacher, and man has found him, not in the word of the Roman priest, who but darkens counsel with words without wisdom, and makes confusion worse confounded, but in Him "who is not far from every one of us," and who shall "guide us into all truth." For this we have the promise of Him who died for us; it is one of the

promises which are sealed unto us, made yea and amen, by His blood. Were the only alternative to the private judgment of my unaided understanding the authoritative dictum of the Church as to the meaning of the sacred oracles, then, to say the least, I could see great room for the claims and pretensions of Rome. But the Christian doctrine is that man is not unhelped in these dangers and difficulties, for dangers and difficulties there are even in following a guidance so explicit as the Book of God; but that he enjoys the very highest guidance, compared with which the best human teaching is but as a lamp of earth to the glorious sun; while if he does not care for and will not seek this higher guidance, all the help which man can offer to him, the word of Church, priest, or Pope, will but lead him down into denser, blacker night.

The work of the Bible in the world is not to govern men, or to furnish to them a rule of action. Its aim is rather to train men to govern and guide themselves. Simple as these two sentences may seem, and slight as may appear at first sight their difference, they really differ by a whole heaven. The Bible is not a code of rules ready prepared for all the accidents and emergencies of life. It is nothing in the least like such a code of rules. There are few sentences in the Bible which will tell any man explicitly what he is to do in any perplexity in which he may find himself involved. A man must read with the eyes of his understanding open in order to get any true guidance out of the Divine word. It has little help for the idle and

indolent on their way. We have to gather what it has to tell us about the conduct of life out of a hundred different histories, out of parables, out of letters to churches, out of letters to friends, out of imaginative poems, out of philosophical treatises, out of songs of praise, or wailings of pain and moanings of despair. And the Bible does not go out of its way to interpret its histories. We must think them over, and settle for ourselves what we are to admire and imitate, what we are to condemn and avoid. Oftentimes the perplexity is extreme. A word of decisive judgment from an authoritative voice would be invaluable; but the voice is silent, we must puzzle out the truth for ourselves. If we choose, we can get a precept or an example to sanction almost anything out of the Book of God. In truth it is of the highest use only to those who have yet higher guidance; who bring with them to the study of the Word a mind already enlightened, a heart already opened to know and to love the truth.

The Pope gets out of one passage, a very startling one surely, the sanction of the whole pretension of Rome. The sacramentarian gets out of another passage, again, a very startling one,—it startled even the disciples,—the sanction of the whole system of sacramental grace. The Mormon gets from some of the noblest lives recorded in its histories the sanction for his licence. The monk draws his ascetic doctrines from the language and habits of the very loftiest and most powerful character which it portrays. The fact that these obscure and difficult passages are left there to become stumbling-

blocks, some of them apparently almost put there to be stumbling-blocks, is surely very significant for those who demand from the Bible that kind of explicit authoritative teaching about all matters of faith and practice, which the Romanist seeks to secure from his Church. It would be difficult to imagine how, without a formal statement, the Lord who gave the Word could have expressed more clearly the true nature and object of the Word, and warned men against seeking from it the kind of guidance which it was not in its power, or at any rate in its purpose, to afford.

And if we persist in treating the Book as a code of infallible precepts for the conduct of life, and of solutions of all the perplexed problems of experience, it is hard to dislodge the Romanist, the sacramentarian, the Mormon, or the ascetic, from the ground on which they entrench themselves. If we treat it as a revelation of the mind of God, and not of His precepts only, if we consult it as we should frequent the lessons of a great teacher, not to get ready-made maxims about life and conduct, but to enlarge our own mental faculty and the field of our vision, to strengthen our principles, to correct our faulty and to complete our partial views of duty and of truth, we are using the Bible for the ends for which God gave it, and are making it the noblest instrument for the unfolding of our spiritual life. But if we treat it as an infallible receipt book for all difficulties and perplexities, and apply its texts, most likely wrenched out of all connection with the subjects on which they were meant to bear, to the

easy settlement of all controversies, as though the mere outward meaning of one sentence settled everything, and the intellect had no other duty than that of humble acquiescence, we make it an idol—we use it as the Jews used it, not to find but to hide from ourselves the living Lord.

It is worthy of note, too, that none of the sacred books of the world, as far as I know, except perhaps the Confucian, are of the preceptive order, or lend themselves to the kind of use to which we compel the Scriptures in spite of themselves to minister. The Confucian sacred books may be looked upon as, on the whole, formal precepts for the conduct of life. Many of them are very wise, very noble; but the moral and mental stature of the civilisation which has been developed under their influence, is the best proof of what this kind of authoritative guidance is worth. But the sacred books of the Hindoos, of the Buddhists, of the Mahomedans, are of quite another character. After a fashion they adopt the same method and aim at the same results as the Christian Scriptures; though in every case they have come to be used by their disciples much as the Old Testament came to be used by the Jews. In the absence of any very venerable religious literature, the Homeric poems, within much narrower limits, served the same purpose for the Greeks. And here it was history again, or what professed to be history, and was accepted as history, which was charged with sacred wisdom for the enlightenment and instruction of mankind. Plato set himself to destroy their in-

fluence, but he failed to get philosophic doctrine enthroned in their room. The republic under the authoritative instruction and government of the philosophers is a dream still, and will remain a dream while the world endures. There is a sense in which his aspiration will be fulfilled: "it remaineth for us in the heavens." There the whole community will be instructed in truth and righteousness, and the republic will hold together because it will rule itself, under the headship of the one blessed and only potentate—the Lord.

There was a use of the Bible in the Middle Ages which is only a little lower than the kind of use to which it is often put in Protestant Christendom now. There was a mode of divination known to the ancients—that is, a means of discovering what they were prepared to accept as the Divine will—which at last got to be known as the *Sortes Virgilianæ*. The book of the poet was opened, and the first line on which the eye fell was supposed to give a Divine indication of the course to be pursued. Under Christianity it still continued. The influence of Virgil in the early days of the Church is a curious and interesting subject, but it is beside the present question. But in process of time the Bible came to be substituted for the book of the poet. The most remarkable instance of something not unlike this divination with which history makes us acquainted is that of St. Augustine. I quote it at length from his *Confessions*. Next to the conversion of St. Paul, it is the event which has exercised the most powerful influence on the destinies of the Church.

In a crisis of inward conflict, the stress of which he powerfully describes, when he was torn with doubts and conflicting attractions, now moved to give himself to Christ, now distracted at the thought of forsaking a world he had keenly loved, he “sent up these sorrowful words, How long, how long? to-morrow and to-morrow? Why not now? Why is there not at this hour an end to my uncleanness?” And the narrative thus proceeds:—

“So was I speaking, and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo! I heard from a neighbouring house a voice, as of a boy or girl, I know not, chanting, and oft repeating, ‘Take up and read; take up and read.’ Instantly, my countenance altered; I began to think most intently whether children were wont in any kind of play to sing such words: nor could I remember ever to have heard the like. So checking the torrent of my tears, I arose; interpreting it to be no other than a command from God to open the book, and read the first chapter I should find. For I had heard of Antony, that coming in during the reading of the Gospel, he received the admonition as if what was being read was spoken to him: ‘Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me.’ And by such oracle he was forthwith converted unto Thee. Eagerly then I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there had I laid the volume of the apostle when I arose thence. I seized, opened, and in silence read that section on which my eyes first fell: ‘Not in rioting and drunkenness,

not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying : but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, in concupiscence.' No further would I read, nor needed I ; instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away.

“ Then putting my finger between, or some other mark, I shut the volume, and with a calmed countenance made it known to Alypius. And what was wrought in him, which I knew not, he thus showed me. He asked to see what I had read : I showed him ; and he looked even further than I had read, and I knew not what followed. This followed, ‘ Him that is weak in the faith, receive ; ’ which he applied to himself, and disclosed to me. And by this admonition was he strengthened ; and by a good resolution and purpose, and most corresponding to his character, wherein he did always very far differ from me, for the better, without any turbulent delay he joined me. Thence we go in to my mother ; we tell her ; she rejoiceth : we relate in order how it took place ; she leaps for joy, and triumpheth, and blesseth Thee, ‘ Who art able to do above that which we ask or think ; ’ for she perceived that Thou hadst given her more for me than she was wont to beg by her pitiful and most sorrowful groanings. For Thou convertedst me unto Thyself, so that I sought neither wife, nor any hope of this world, standing in that rule of faith where Thou hadst showed me unto her in a vision, so many years before. And Thou didst ‘ convert her mourning into joy,’ much

more plentiful than she had desired, and in a much more precious and purer way than she erst required, by having grandchildren of my body.”—*Confessions*, B. viii., 30.

It is difficult not to recognize here the intervention of a higher hand. But it has something in common with the kind of divination which I have described, and on the whole probably tended to promote the practice in the Church. Yet the casting of lots, which is but the same thing under another form, rests on a very explicit sentence of the Bible, and on the action of apostolic men at a most critical moment. Though the result ought to be a warning. Matthias, on whom the lot fell, is never heard of in sacred or secular history again. No doubt the custom reveals a very low, poor form of reverence for the Bible. It is using it as a mere incantation, to summon spirits to guide us from the unseen world; and is on the same level with the “spiritualism” of our times. But much of our most religious use of the Book is little higher. We are deaf to the exhortation, “Why do ye not of your own selves judge that which is right?”

We have had a good deal of fierce controversy about the Bible of late, and no satisfactory account has yet been given of the nature and measure of its inspiration. Perhaps it is not in the nature of things that an entirely satisfactory account should be given. But most thoughtful people, I imagine, have arrived at the conclusion that it is a book whose various portions were written under very various conditions, and contain in very various measures the direct

communications of God to man. The Gospel of St. John, the Epistle to the Romans, the Book of Judges, the Book of Esther, the cursing Psalms, and the Epistle of St. Jude, contain, as I imagine most thoughtful people are prepared to allow, very different measures of inspiration, if indeed in the case of some of them you can speak of inspiration at all, except from a passionate human spring.

The revelation of God is in the Bible; this is the Christian creed. It is the creed of the writers of the New Testament, if we may judge by the freedom with which they handled the Old Testament Scriptures. It is the creed of the men who formed the Canon, or rather of the Church under whose care the Canon was formed, in ways that none of us can quite understand, and on evidence the whole of which can never be recovered. The way in which the Canon was left to be formed by human judgment, not unguided surely, seems to be positive proof of the position with regard to the Bible for which we contend. If every sentence was intended for explicit guidance on some point, and was charged with the whole weight of the authority of God, we cannot believe that we should have been left without clear definition as to what is Scripture and what is not. The Church which settled the Canon had not the least idea that it was doing more than securing in the whole book the means of arriving at a true knowledge of the mind and the will of God. Men would have dreaded to touch it, if they had supposed that in every word, or every book even, which they allowed or rejected, they

were dealing with an absolute authoritative Divine voice. In the early Church, the free and healthy view which was taken of the Scriptures may be explained by the importance which was attached to tradition. But then this means that in the judgment of the ancients the mere written Word was not the whole guidance which God had vouchsafed to man.

The doctrine that the revelation of God is in the Bible, is a very different thing from saying that every word which is put into the mouth of God in the Bible, or professes to be spoken in His name, is charged with His Spirit, with the revelation of His nature, in the same sense and to the same extent as the word, "God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

We have arrived, most of us, I suppose, at the above conclusion, after the searching controversies of the last few years. But we can all remember the bitter outcry, especially from the more zealous of the Evangelical clergy, when they saw this conclusion looming in the distance. It seemed as if it would shake the whole foundation of their faith from under their feet. I remember one of them saying, "If you rob me of my belief in the infallible truth of every sentence in the Bible, you destroy altogether the foundations of my faith." Now this is ultra-Protestantism. The Reformers were far from thus foolishly worshipping the Bible. They held it in nobler honour. Such a state of mind could only become possible when men, long weary of the strain of spiritual intelligence and effort, and

forbidden to rest on the Roman doctrine of the Infallible, are glad to set up another idol in its room.

And what, fairly stated, is the argument which is behind these fears? It is this, that if we refuse to believe that the sun and the moon and the whole system of the universe stood still, that Israel might take its fill of slaughter; or if we refuse to believe that some of the most ruthless and savage commands to exterminate whole peoples, by way of revenge for ancient hostility, came forth by direct inspiration from Him who came into this world not to destroy men's lives but to save them, then we have absolutely no ground for the belief that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And "God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." This to me seems rank idolatry of the Word, and makes a claim on its behalf which it never urges for itself. Surely, in the light which Christ casts on the name and the nature of God, we are bound to believe that Samuel, in that terrible commission of slaughter, mistook patriotic passion for the Divine fire.

We are not bound to believe that the great ones of the Bible always interpreted with perfect justness the movements of the Divine Spirit in their hearts. Peter doubtless believed that he was directed from above in the matter of abstention from Gentile fellowship at Antioch, until a clearer direction reached

him through the energetic language and action of St. Paul. Prophets might become arrogant and self-willed by age and a long life of absolute rule, as well as kings; they might not always search their own spirits deeply, and separate the wheat of the Word from the chaff of their own political schemes. And God expected the people to recognize their prophets on whose word their salvation was hanging, mainly by the truth that was in them. In the case of the great majority of the prophets, as far as we can see, no miraculous help was afforded for their recognition. Men were left to discover God's word by the way in which it searched their hearts and consciences, even when matters of vital moment depended on their discernment. Under the Old Testament, as under the New, the trust of men was not to rest on the formal utterances of formally accredited teachers. There was room there, too, for the ministry of the Spirit, who under the Law as well as under the Gospel, takes of the things which are Christ's, and shows them unto men.

And it is very remarkable, too, how freely the most abject idolaters of the Word handle the Bible when its plain sentences traverse their views. Their intelligence does not quietly acquiesce when the Word sets its dictum before them; it is quite wonderful how they will twist and torture it to make it say what they believe to be right. They explain scripture by scripture, they say; but they always choose the scripture which is to explain all others. They select the ruling thought in harmony with their habit of mind or their educational notions,

and then they inflict any amount of wrong on all words which are inconsistent with it, to compel them to strengthen their adopted scriptural ideas. Those who believe, for instance, in the national restoration of Israel, select the passages which seem explicitly to promise it, and torture to impossible meanings the numerous passages which bear precisely the opposite way. Those who do not believe in the restoration, go through the converse process with equally satisfactory results. Practically, men cannot help bringing an enlightened judgment, or what they take to be an enlightened judgment, to bear on the interpretation of the Bible; and while they accept humbly and joyfully its great revelations, on all outlying matters they interpret it in harmony with the decisions of the reason and the instincts of the heart.

May I here, while dwelling on this point, quote some sentences from a book which I published four years ago, in which I was led to speak on this subject, especially as it bears on a matter of vital importance, the education of the young, the bringing up of a child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord:—

“And when we come to the higher function of the Bible, the case is sadder still. Just as we will not wait for God to begin the teaching of young hearts about sin, so we will not wait for God to show to them the worth and the power of His Word. We start at once by insisting on claims for it which it never urges for itself. Its absolute authority, its plenary inspiration, it never asserts;

it leaves us to discover them as we discover the sun, and turn to it for light and fire. The Bible, like the Master, speaks with authority, because so unlike the scribes; because the word spoken is so full of heavenly light and love, that men can see the Divine mark on it, and rejoice. We do our very best to make the Bible speak *as* the scribes, who began by claiming authority, and demanded, on that ground, the acceptance of their truth. God asks no acceptance of His gifts, but such as their worth may win for them. O! we of little faith, why cannot we trust His book to His own method, and let the light and the life with which He has freely charged it glow and quicken through the world? What the Bible supremely wants is freedom. 'You *must* think thus and thus about it, and about its every word,' say the divines. 'Leave it free to win its reverence,' we answer; 'there is light there bright enough to be seen without your glasses, and power enough to be only hampered by your officious hand.'

"And be sure that no amount of demonstration of its Divine origin and authority, no reiteration of its claims, will win for it your child's homage. Formal reverence, such as men pay to scribes, you can compel; but true homage, mere authority never wins. The Bible is God's book to the child, precisely in the measure in which his sympathy is drawn forth to it, as presenting some outward image of his inner life. If he finds the key there which unlocks the wards of his experience; if he finds the truth there which casts a flood of light

on the dark, and a dew of comfort on the sad passages of his life—the Bible has found the child, not the child the Bible; and that finding never fails. If you can connect the outer word in the Book with the inner word in the life, and teach your child to seek it—not for formal lessons, not for knowledge of sacred things only, not for Sunday reading, but for real light in real darkness, real comfort in real sorrow, real help in real need,—you have made the Bible the man of his counsel until death; you have rendered his belief of the Bible absolutely proof against every effort of the adversary to undermine it. A thousand critics may assail its most sacred passages, it troubles him not; for him its light shines on, because it is God's light, unshorn of a single beam.”—*The Home Life*, pp. 162-4.

In truth, to understand the Bible rightly, we must begin with the things which are Christ's; we must work into our minds and hearts the revelation of the Father which He hath given us, and the revelation of Himself who gave it: then we shall have a light within us by which we may explore safely all its darker and more difficult paths. We shall find, if we suffer Christ to guide us to its interpretation, and can seize the idea of His kingdom which the Book in its wholeness develops, that there is some pure light in many a passage which seemed to be charged only with the expression of human passion or prejudice. We shall see how the Lord was working through all the ages, by means of human passion and prejudice, to rule passion and to destroy prejudice, by teaching men the lessons of

self-denial and charity. We shall see how age by age His Spirit, working in the men and the peoples of whom the Bible treats, and by whom it was written, revealed the mind of God more and more clearly through the weakness, folly, and passion of the human; till humanity had reached that stage of culture, that it was possible that a human life should perfectly express Him to the world.

I believe that every page of the Bible records a distinct step in the working out of that consummation. We can spare none of it; from Genesis to the Apocalypse it contains the utterance of one mind, the history of the fulfilment of one purpose. The promise which was uttered in Eden will be fulfilled in heaven; and between Eden and heaven the Bible traces man's pilgrim path. But in reading every page we have to read as wise men, and to judge what the Spirit saith unto the Church. He who is taught of God alone can understand the mind of God. The witness of the Spirit to the truth of the Word is the only foundation on which we can build our faith. They who build on words, however sacred, expose themselves to perpetual terrors. The critics, as they bring their ruthless method to bear on this passage or that passage, are literally cutting away from them a portion of their life; while he who knows the truth from the witness of the Spirit of truth, can watch the intellectual process with unclouded serenity. He has a faith which no mere sentence even of a sacred oracle gave to him, and which no destruction of sentences can destroy.

IV.

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST.

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WE have already traced to its fountain the yearning of man's heart for infallible guidance along life's difficult and dangerous paths. He is oppressed by the exceeding difficulty and complexity of its problems. He is like a mariner set adrift on a vast, unknown, moaning sea, vexed by storms, swept by currents whose set and force he can only dimly estimate; while he hears the waves churning on the rocks in the distance, and catches here and there a lurid line of foam through the gloom. "Who is sufficient for these things?" is the agonized cry of his spirit. This poor weak heart, this sensual body, this tempting world, with heaven and hell hanging on life's issues! Who dares face it? Who can look calmly out on this wild dark sea, without compass, without pilot, while the cloud wrack veils the stars? To the stout old Northumbrian thane life was like the passage of a bird through a lighted hall. It flies in out of the darkness, enjoys the light and the warmth for a moment, and then flies out into the darkness again.

Whatever the metaphor, we all understand the truth which is behind it; that is, those of us who are resolved to face it, and not to think that we can escape its problems by burying our heads, ostrich-like, in the sand.

And we reason with ourselves thus. God, my Maker, cannot have meant me to face these dread perils, these tremendous issues, unguided by His absolute wisdom, unsustained by His omnipotent hand. There must be somewhere for us an infallible guide. No wisdom less perfect than God's can solve the problem; no strength less firm can bear the burden which crushes unaided humanity to the dust. And the words of Scripture are full of the promise of such guidance. It is the very substance of the first promise, which all subsequent manifestations of God fulfil. That God would mix His wisdom and strength with the human, was the promise which lit with hope the sad path of our first parents. The Incarnation is the fundamental fact of man's history. Without that purpose, there had never been in the universe such a world as this.

But when we come to consider the nature of the guidance which may be looked for, we find that man's conceptions of it are in the main determined by the suggestions of his own faithless, indolent, and sensual heart. Naturally,—that is, when unquickened by a Divine spirit, of whose ministry some vision offered itself to the noblest heathen thinkers,—he dreads the strain of spiritual effort; he dreads the flight above the cloud world, the struggling onward and upward, till with weary

pinion he can pass into the serener air of the upper heavens, and gaze with open face on the light of the celestial sun. His natural craving is to be let alone. The noblest are conscious of it as well as the basest. Moses struggled hard against his vocation, till it was forced on him. Was not a similar struggling at the heart of all the furious persecutions of Saul of Tarsus, who shrank from the vague vision of what might be before him, if he yielded himself to the service of that Master, who was already weaving strong bands of constraint around both his intellect and his heart. And man naturally desires to be spared the strain and the effort. He would gladly make over the direction of his moral career to some guide who will lift the burden from off his spirit,* and tell him in plain set terms what he must think and what he must do.

This dread of spiritual effort, of the unseen world of faith, is the spring which in every age feeds the influence and authority of the priest. The Roman Church offers exactly the kind of guidance which man's natural heart yearns for, until advancing knowledge makes him too wise, or at any rate too instructed, to rest on it. The Roman Church has held her influence over the world through all these ages, by professing to be able to give in explicit, didactic terms heaven's answer to the question, which in some form or other breaks from every human heart, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Hear the Church, is the explicit answer of

* See the remarkable confession of Professor Huxley. (*Lay Sermons*, p. 373.)

Rome. There, in the voice of the Church, is God's answer spelt out in simple human language, and with human adaptation to all the changing needs of life. Trust the direction of the Church, and in all critical contingencies and exigencies there will be one close by you who will tell you, in heaven's name and by heaven's authority, what you must think, say, and do.

And so long as men's thoughts refuse to travel beyond the narrow range laid down for their excursion by the Church, the priest's guidance answers tolerably. But when the idea dawns upon them—and the dawning is simply inevitable—that this great universe is not according to the plan which the Church has laid down, and is not governed according to the maxims which appear divinely wise to the intelligence of the priest, and that the priestly guidance is out of all decent harmony with the facts of nature, life, and society, then the heaviest trouble to the soul and to society has its birth. When men can no longer help seeing that the trusted guidance is a misguidance, and that those who blindly follow it are brought into constant, painful, and at last shattering collision with the realities of things around them, then as “a dream when one awaketh” this “rest in the Church” vanishes, and is replaced by a bitter restlessness which is the fruitful mother of revolutions—that is, violent, passionate struggles to bring the world into harmony with what man in his best moods dreams that it ought to be, and was meant to be by its Maker, God. This is the motive power of all great revolutions—a passionate desire

to realize at once what will come at length, after long ages of discipline and suffering. Wonderfully beautiful and even heavenly visions float before the minds of men in these great ages of upheaval. In the first French Revolution very Christian ideas were working obscurely in the minds of the men who had the direction of its movements. But when they came to realize them, they had no nobler method than their own passion and carnal force could suggest to them, and the Paradise regained became a Saturnalia of lust, blasphemy, and blood.

Such an awaking, perhaps the greatest in the world's history, occurred three hundred and fifty years ago. Men were maddened by the conviction, which was forced upon them by a thousand proofs, that their Church had become spiritually worthless, and worse than worthless. They discovered by sure signs which there was no possibility of mistaking, that their infallible guide was drifting them further and further away from the truth of God. Then they opened their Bibles, which the progress of culture and the printing press had furnished—in a way very wonderful if we consider it, and in numbers fairly equal to their needs. They found there that which, for all who had the courage fairly to look at it, dissipated the Church-dream of infallible guidance for ever. That which they found developed in their Bibles as apostolic, as Christian, made the system of their Church, which like a Church system of old had become an intolerable yoke, seem to be a foul creature of the Pagan bondage and right. The Book, when brought fairly to

bear on the Church system of Rome, destroyed it utterly and for ever, in the judgment of the most cultivated and liberty-loving peoples of the world. The open Bible from that hour has been the dread and the scourge of Rome.

But the Book itself! There, surely, we come upon the traces of an infallible guide! Most surely, to those who can read the Book, and draw forth its truth. The Book reveals to us the mind of God, as from Himself, in such modes and measures as He sees to be for our good. And this is surely infallible. God's own word from God's own lips! Here must be infallible guidance, if anywhere! And the statement cannot be controverted; if God's word is in the Bible,—and we are not arguing here with those who doubt or deny it,—the Book must, as far as it declares the mind of God, contain infallible guidance for man. But the difficulty with Protestantism is to discover exactly where the infallible guidance lies. There is truth in the Bible, pure, as in its native heaven. But it is like ore in the mine. The practical question is, and apparently one of no small difficulty, How are we to draw it forth? If God intended the Bible to be anything like the infallible guide which the Romanist seeks in his Church,—that is, an explicit direction what to think, what to believe, and what to do, in every new contingency which may arise,—one would be compelled to say that the Bible had signally failed to accomplish its work. If it was intended to be always at hand, as a skilled guide in an unknown desert, to indicate with absolute certainty

the way, the Bible must be dismissed as a lamentable failure. It supplies nothing like a complete code of directions for the conduct of life. Those who open it thinking that they will readily find a text which will relieve them of the burden of thought and judgment in any difficulty, so that they may dismiss all care, will find the Book singularly perplexing. It is history, poetry, prophecy, biography, correspondence, essay, but nothing like a succinct hand-book of faith and practice. It seems to say to a man at once, when he consults it unmindful of the Spirit who has promised to be *the* guide, Think while you read, reflect, compare, conclude; judge what the Book seems to say, and after you have got all the light from it which it can give you, remember that the responsibility of right action is with you, and not with God; that if you go wrong, whatever the Book may seem to say, and however naturally you may have been misled by it, the penalty will be exacted in your own experience of life.

The Bible is "a light shining in a dark place," whereby men may see for themselves their way. It is in no sense a code of directions to save them the trouble of thinking and judging about it at all. Do not let us misunderstand the kind of help which it offers to us. If it professed to be an infallible directory for man as to what he was to think and what he was to do, the sects of Protestant Christendom would be an amazing phenomenon. It would be blankly incomprehensible, except on the supposition that Christianity was but another form of

heathen superstition, mocking men with a word of promise to the ear, but breaking it to the heart. There have been more sects under Protestantism than under all other religions of the world put together. Nowhere so many various judgments, various folds, various paths, as since this supposed infallible guide took visibly and avowedly the direction of men.

Doubtless this is due in some measure to the almost idolatrous reverence with which men have regarded its words and phrases. It is a book of singular freedom; full of clashing statements and inconsistent views—that is, to those who hold by the letter. Men naturally cling to the ideas which are most in tune with their mental habits and associations, and so there are as many “views” as there are difficult statements in the Word of God. If the matter is important, the “views” develop into sects, and men contend for their partial extracts from the Bible as though they contained and set forth the whole truth of God. But the sects of Protestantism, which have been the subjects of keen and scornful criticism from Roman Catholic writers, cannot be accounted for solely on the ground of this perversity. It is in the nature of the thing itself to generate sects in the earlier stages of its development, and the controversies and conflicts of the sects are the conditions in such a confused world as this, of the unfolding of the true idea of the kingdom of God. They spring necessarily out of that freedom which Protestantism not only allows but commands. The right of private

judgment means the duty of private judgment, if it has any honest meaning at all. And this duty of private judgment, as man is constituted, and as the Bible on which it is to be exercised is constituted, cannot but develop many folds within the bosom of the unity of the Christian world.

But there is nothing in this to sadden us if we estimate truly the nature of the Bible and the work which it was sent to accomplish. If we regard it as the great stimulant and nurse of the independent thought and judgment of men, commanding them to think for themselves, training them to think for themselves, grounding them in sound principles rather than in formal conclusions, teaching them to begin well, and then leaving them to try the paths that they may end well, always under a yet higher guide, though left in full possession of their freedom, then we can understand the aspects of Protestantism perfectly. It was likely that under such conditions much healthy variety of thought and conduct would develop itself, and that only after long experiment and rich experience would men arrive at the true unity, keeping "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

What we should like, I suppose, would be some clear explicit announcement on the indisputable authority of heaven, which would settle at once and for ever all the doubts which distress and often agonize us. We should like to have heaven's judgment about our own being, our origin and destiny; about the nature and attributes of God, as we phrase it; about the precise nature and measure of the

inspiration of the Bible, the relation of its several parts, the exact bearing and force of some of its most startling commandments, the real meaning of those difficult words of Christ which seem to look towards asceticism, and to make the ordinary conduct of the business of life appear inconsistent with a high strain of love and devotion to Himself. Once, just before He quitted them finally, the Lord opened the Scriptures to his disciples, and expounded to two of them "in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." What would we not give in these days if that discourse had been preserved; if we could hear as from Christ's own lips the true bearing of the deepest passages of the Old Testament on His office and work. But it has perished utterly. In its original form not a fragment of it remains. It is wonderful how much of the precious legacy of the past has been spared; but it is equally wonderful how much has been suffered to perish. We can only explain it on the principle that it was no part of the plan of God to spare us difficulty and controversy when He gave to us the Scripture, but rather to offer what was certain to become material for controversy, as the first stage in the discovery of truth.

Specially does it seem to us that some authoritative voice is needed to instruct us as to the bearing of some of the most important dicta of the apostles: Paul's, for instance, about women and marriage, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, which reads so strangely beside the noble unfolding of the relation of the sexes in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to

the Ephesians. What reality, again, may be behind the awful and explicit words which speak of everlasting torments on the one hand, and the dim but glorious passages in the Ephesians and Colossians, which seem to foreshadow a universal restoration, on the other. The subjects are of paramount importance, but the passages which bear upon them are singularly difficult and obscure. Able scholars are wrangling keenly over the shades of meaning which the words and particles employed may convey. But a definite statement, harmonizing conflicting and explaining difficult passages, one can conceive, would have made this vital matter plain. Our minds are kept on the rack about all these questions, on which the conduct of life and the destinies of eternity are hanging; they vex and torment the world.

Constantly, too, do we find, if we lose the sense of the fellowship of the Spirit, that the path of duty seems painfully dim. Considerations seem evenly balanced, on the one side and on the other, in matters which involve grave consequences to those dear to us or to ourselves. We may strain both brain and heart to discern the right thing to do. Oh, for a clear, precise, final word from the perfect Intelligence! Whatever the issue then, we should feel that it might safely be left in His hand. But the guidance in that form does not come to us. We stumble and grope painfully along the path, expecting some explicit indication of the way. We think that our hearts are in an obedient mood; that if we did but know the right thing, we would

gladly do it. How many think that if they had but known Christ after the flesh, and felt the spell of His presence, a holy life would have been easy. And so if God would but take us by the hand and set us in the path, we think we could follow it bravely, cheerfully, even to death. But we seem left to find the way for ourselves and for others. "Lord, and what shall this man do?" we ask; but no answer comes. We give advice in critical moments, but we are in the dark, as it were, and would withdraw it as soon as it is given, lest we should be leading a trusting soul to wreck. Oh, for one flash of heaven's sunlight for a moment, that we might see all round us, and know clearly what we are doing, and whither we are guiding a life dearer than our own! These are our desires, our demands of Providence. Nothing less than this, nothing lower than this, can help our need, with such a nature as ours, and in such a world. And the demand, like the kindred one, "Show me now Thy glory," is not at once satisfied. We are sent back without the vision, and yet we are bidden to look forward, to trust to an infallible celestial guide. To those whose hearts are not open to the higher teaching, life must seem profoundly sad and perplexing. Those who can comprehend the mission of the Comforter go cheerful, courageous, hopeful on their way.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."—John xiv. 15, 16.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that

I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment : of sin, because they believe not on me ; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more ; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth : for He shall not speak of Himself ; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak : and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me : for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine : therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."—John xvi. 7—15.

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God ; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God : for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet He Himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him ? But we have the mind of Christ."—1 Cor. ii. 12, 14—16.

"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."—1 John ii. 20.

Let us consider the conditions of this guidance which He affords. An infallible guide, surely. The Spirit of truth. How is it possible that under such a leader men should stray ?

Here is the chronic difficulty. A revelation of truth, God's absolute truth from God's own lips, in God's own life ; and yet among those who with their whole hearts accept the revelation, infinite diversities, internecine strifes, over these very words of God. Here are words in the Bible which seem to be meant to settle the controversy of religionists,

—words to tell us what baptism means, what the Lord's Supper means, what faith means, what the work of the Spirit in calling and saving souls means. Men whom we believe to have been taught by the Spirit of God, and to have been specially endowed for this very end, have written of these things; and yet the most desperate battles recorded in history have really been fought over the meaning of these very words. Is the revelation, then, a dreary failure? Is it so ill expressed that it actually generates more strife than it allays? Looking at the results, we might be tempted to take this view of it; and the Lord, foreseeing that men would bring the eye of the understanding rather than the eye of the spirit to bear upon it, anticipated full sadly the divisions and strifes which His Gospel would kindle in the world. But not even with this prevision would He alter or modify the character of the revelation. He would not spare the world this confusion, this conflict of thought, this strife of tongues. He left it to work on; surely because He knew that there was a Spirit who helped men's infirmities, who would rule this storm, order this confusion, guide this struggle to a victorious issue, and justify at length the long, stern, disheartening process to every eye and to every heart.

We all understand the difference between teaching an intelligent boy what to think and how to think. Suppose that he has a problem to solve, or a sentence in a classical author to translate. The teacher may show him the solution in a moment, or read the sentence to him in English. So far he

understands it; he knows what it means. The teacher may even indicate the sense of each separate word, so that he can attach an intelligent meaning to the parts of the sentence as well as to the whole. Well, he knows that sentence perfectly; but that is all. But there is another way. The teacher may spend much time in instructing him, not only in the meaning of a particular sentence, but as to how sentences are formed, how the parts of a sentence are related, how to look in any sentence for the verb and the noun, and how their inflections bear upon the sense. The boy may not for the moment be able to tell what any particular sentence means as glibly as his comrade who has had it read off to him in English, but he is in the way of understanding in time, not that sentence only, but all sentences, and of attaining to a perfect knowledge of that language, or of any language which he may choose to study, at last.

And this is the key to God's method with us. He does not send a visible, tangible guide with us through the unknown desert, to mark out every step for us, and to spare us all anxiety about the road. He rather instructs us as to the character of the country, the landmarks, the nature of the paths, the bearings of the stars, and leaves us to find the way, assuring us that He is not ignorant of or indifferent to our progress, and that sure help will be at hand in our moment of extreme perplexity and need. He affirms that we have an infallible teacher—even the Spirit of truth, who shall lead us into all truth. This is the first fundamental principle of

the guidance, the assurance to our faith that we are in personal contact and relation with an infallible guide. We who accept the revelation of the Bible cannot question it. He who is the Truth is seeking ever by all means to guide us into all truth. But His method is not to lead us swiftly to infallibly certain results. He could save us the trouble of a great deal of thought and pain about many things by a word, by leading us at once to the end of the process, and telling us what we can only discover after a long and toilsome quest. But He does not. He begins with us at the beginning ; He grounds us thoroughly in the principles of right thinking and right living, by drawing our minds and hearts into fellowship with His own ; and then He suffers us to work towards the result, the complete discovery of truth, by the process of thought, conviction, experiment, and the general experience of life. He will have us to know for ourselves, and not only because He tells us ; and this involves the necessity of our thinking, observing, experimenting, and making inevitably many grievous mistakes.

A lad who has not been told the results of all the processes of arithmetic which he may be learning, so as to be able to repeat them perfectly, but who has been taught the rules luminously, and has had the law of the matter fully explained to him, is sure to make many mistakes in working out the various problems for himself. But he is in the right track. The mistakes are in *him*, not in his teacher or in his method. Every day's practice tends to correct the mistakes, or rather the inexperience and inepti-

tude out of which they spring, and will make him a perfect master of his art in time. These are simple explanations, but the keys to the Divine methods are always simple. The solution of the problem is always close by us. The mystery of the Divine ways is best explained by a close study of the nearest, simplest, and most familiar things in the natural relationships and experiences of life. And so the good Spirit, seeking to guide us into all truth, does not at the first step fill our minds with phrases and formulæ of knowledge. Again we insist upon the impossibility of drawing ready-made formularies of truth out of the Divine Word. The Light of Life is the light which throughout it offers to us. The first work of the Spirit is to bring us into healthful and sympathetic relation with true and noble lives ; and step by step He leads us on until *the* Life is revealed to us. The aim of the whole discipline is to make us know Him, whom to know is eternal life. To bring us into loving, believing communion with a living person who spake the truth, lived the truth, and is the truth, is the supreme aim of every exhortation, every invitation, and every commandment. Knowing Him, we are brought into that kind of moral relation with truth which prepares us for the discovery of all its depths and heights.

To know the truth in the Christian sense is to have a certain power in the soul quickened and strengthened to discern it, to hold it, to possess it, in the various forms in which it offers itself to our apprehension. The man who really knows a science

is the man who has mastered its methods, and who has therefore the key to unlock every ward which he may wish to enter, and to solve every problem which may successively present itself. This mastery of truth the Spirit affords to us by bringing us into spiritual fellowship with a Being who *is* Truth. Knowing Him, the sense of what truth means to a spiritual being, of what it is worth, grows clear and strong; we find ourselves in a mental and moral harmony with it which is the true condition of knowing it. A faculty is created, or rather quickened and cultivated in the soul, which will enable us in time to range through the whole circle, and make all the treasures of truth our own. The chief ministry of the Spirit is to the spiritual nature of the man who is to be the truth seeker. It is really like the opening of the eyes to the blind; the truth of things, as far as the eye is concerned with them, is there all round them; they have but to see, to believe, and to know. The man who is under the guidance of the Spirit finds his heart turned away from beholding vanities. The shows of things content him no longer; he has learned to discriminate substance from shadow. He has the touchstone purified and polished within him. He learns new aspirations, sympathies, affections. His interests haunt a different and till then an undiscovered sphere. Being brought into spiritual relation with the God of truth, he goes forth to the quest of truth—that knowledge which satisfies and nourishes his intellectual part, with fair hope of substantial success.

Then, when he has been drawn forth to the love of truth and the search for truth, the Spirit guides him to train and strain his own faculties in pursuit of it. He does not forestall the search by dogmatic utterances. He leads man through, and not by the suspension of his freedom; and if men seeking the good and the true try first this counterfeit and then that with a good and honest heart, and swiftly finding their vanity retrace their steps, it is no part of the purpose of their guide to spare them the bitter experience, whereby with new intelligence and power they will speedily set forth in a more excellent way. It is a dire mistake to suppose that the aim of God in our instruction is to make us think rightly at once about everything. It would be much more true to say that His purpose is to make us feel rightly, to place us in true moral relations, in the attitude of the lover and seeker of truth :—

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended : but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded : and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”—Phil. iii. 13—16.

If any man will do His will, he is in the way of knowing the doctrine of all things else in time.

The guide is infallible, but we have no infallible apprehension of His guidance. And this is where seekers so constantly go astray. They imagine that what is meant by infallible guidance is something

which will leave no possibility of error, absolutely no room to stray. But if this is what God meant to give us, and undertook to give us, then, to put the matter plainly, Revelation is an utter failure. It does nothing like this for us; it seems to have no power to do anything like this for the world. But this is what the Romanist is really thinking of when he points scornfully to the sects of Protestantism. He supposes that Protestants ought to find in their Bible precisely what he says that he finds in his Church, and now has created, because he has failed to find it in the measure of his need—such clear direction about faith and conduct, as with the very commonest intelligence and obedience would make it impossible to stray. But this is most certainly not what God has given us in the Bible. It is not what He ever purposed or promised to give us in the Bible. It is what, if we had it or thought we had it in any way, He would regard as an idol, and would feel bound to shatter and destroy. What He gives us, and it is just an unspeakable gift, is the assurance that there is an infallible guide, watching our weak endeavours, directing our trembling wayward steps. One who, if our hearts are purely and simply open to His guidance, cannot deceive us or lead us astray. His direction of our spirits is really a training us to guide ourselves in full view of the unseen realities, as a man with clear sight and firm brain guides himself with the eye of sense in view of the material realities which are around him here. This culture involves constant experiments in this direction and that, and the

certainty of many errors, many slips, many perilous and painful falls. But the Christian belief is that through all these errors and mistakes He is still leading us on to a fuller acquaintance with truth, and will guide us surely into all truth at last.

If this principle be true, it would seem that our various thoughts and views, out of which spring our various "folds," were contemplated in the scheme of spiritual training which God has wrought out for us and completely unfolded in His Son. The cry of our times is for unity. Men groan over the divisions of Christendom, the rents in the seamless garment, and hold that these varieties of thought and action are a grievous hinderance to the full unfolding of the form and accomplishment of the work of the kingdom of God. A visible unity is the object at which many able and pious minds are earnestly aiming, as the necessary condition of the manifestation of the Saviour to the world. It may well be that these very diversities of thought and action, being the inevitable fruit of the free play of the faculties upon the deep things of God, may be the ordained means in God's hand of realizing the perfection of which liberty is the essential condition. God's thoughts are high as the heaven above our thoughts; and the unity of which the Saviour had vision when he prayed "that they all may be one," so far transcends any visible image of it that man can fashion, that it is possible that the visible image may be the chief hinderance in its way. If we will let thought go free, and not tremble and scream if it seems to range wildly

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in its freedom, the image of a unity may begin to fashion itself here, which shall belong even on earth, as the Lord belonged, to the heavenly sphere.

Our ultimate trust, then, is not in an infallible Church, nor in an infallible book, but in an infallible Teacher, who is leading us by ways of doubt and question and error, which we know not, to the knowledge of the mind of God. If we pray to be enlightened, and desire the light supremely, God does not undertake that we shall not for the moment go wrong; but He does undertake in His Son that the error shall not be unto death, but unto life. And here the great question of the relation of doubt to belief comes in. On this I shall have more to say in a subsequent chapter. I only say here that there is much doubt that is of God, much that men call unbelief that is of God. There is an unbelief which is the sad, confused protest of a perplexed soul against incredible dogmas about God and His ways enshrined in the temples of the religious world of the times. But it is God's light which is the moving principle of the protest, stirring up an honest, pious soul to see that these things about God cannot possibly be true. But why does not the doubter get better ideas? may be the question. There is the Bible, why does he not go to that, and help his unbelief? Alas! it is not so easy to get to the Bible, though it may be in every man's hand; we have so made the Word of God of none effect by our tradition. Men repelled by the popular ideas of God and the kingdom, are told that they are in the Bible,

and they may find passages which look like them in the Bible; and so they are drawn far away from Bible and Church, to long wanderings in the desert of doubt and scepticism, till they reach the promised land at last.

But surely the promise of God is that His Spirit shall be with all such doubters and seekers; and that under His infallible guidance the perplexities, doubts, and errors which distract us shall be steps upward and not downward, means whereby we shall arrive in the end at the full understanding of truth. And all the various creeds and methods of the Churches are, under the hand of that selfsame Spirit, essential parts of a great harmony, organs of a great unity, which His energy is developing through all the ages of earth's history. The form of it is too large and transcendent for man's intellect to measure, for man's vision to take in. An earthly and distorted image of it, which heaven owns not, and which earth will shatter and destroy, has fashioned itself at Rome. The idol will be shivered into fragments. There are forces abroad at this moment which are shattering it to the foundation; the very fragments of it will be ground to powder. It may be that the true image will rise out of the wreck, and shine on the world.

The Natural History of Antichrist.

The Natural History of Antichrist.

THERE is a branch of Biblical evidences which is certainly too much overlooked, in comparison with those points of minute criticism which receive at any rate their full share of attention. I refer to what might be called the unities of the Word of God. Certain great ideas run through the Scripture, and tinge, perhaps saturate, the thoughts and utterances of men widely diverse in thought, temperament, and experience; separated, too, from each other in point of time, not only by hundreds, but even by thousands of years. And this unity of idea bears to my mind overwhelming evidence that a higher mind, an all-seeing mind, was in contact with these human minds, and was showing to them thoughts and visions absolutely beyond the range of their own unaided powers.

And these unities which I speak of, and on one of the most prominent of which I am about to dwell, are altogether beyond such explanation as the principle of imitation or intellectual inheritance could afford. Not as imitators, as we shall see, but as original and

profound thinkers, with deep insight into their times, and admirable adaptation to their exigencies, wrote Isaiah and St. John. Foremost probably in this class of unities stand those forecastings of the reality and the nature of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus with which the Old Testament is so richly gemmed ; and that vision, too, of the development, the conflict, anguish, and triumph of the kingdom, which the apostles saw dimly, but which the seer of the Apocalypse saw in its full splendour ; wherein lies the key to all that has been most profound and pregnant in man's history from the hour of the advent of the King until now.

The more that one studies history, the more intense becomes the conviction that the advent of the Messiah was, historically speaking, the true crisis of the world's life. The whole history of the world up to that time seems to be one grand demonstration of the necessity of such an advent ; while the whole course of history since has revealed, that the progress of society is simply the progressive reign of that power which the Lord brought into the world, over human consciences and hearts.

As this conviction grows, this other conviction naturally grows with it, that men like Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah, Matthew, Paul, and John, who were separated in point of time, culture, and nature by everything which can separate men of the same race, but who were yet united by a common belief in this transcendent truth, and spake of it age after age with one heart and with one voice, were not uttering their own small dreams or imagin-

ings of what might be, but were uttering things which the Lord had shown to them, and spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. There is a grand unity in Scripture which seems beyond the comprehension in its wholeness of the individual writers who composed it; and which bears overwhelming evidence, I think, that we are in contact in their writings, not only with the thoughts of man, but with the thought of God.

Parallel to this vision of the kingdom, glimpses of which are the oases of Scripture history and prophecy, we have presented in the Bible historic or prophetic pictures of the great antagonist power. The one seems to attend the other as its shadow. The one is all brightness, the other is painted black as night. The great burden of Scripture, the great burden of history,—using the word burden in its nobler, its prolific sense, the light, the joy, the glory of both,—is the work of the Lord in the establishment of His kingdom. The great sorrow of Scripture, the great sorrow of history, the shadow and shame of both, is the devil's work in resisting the Divine reign, and in building up in successive ages systems founded on human force, cunning, and fraud, which may have some show of likeness to the kingdom, to stand up in its room. The Father worketh always, the Son also worketh. The mystery of iniquity, too, is ever working; counterfeiting and resisting the Divine reign. That unity which we find in Scripture in the visions and previsions of the kingdom of heaven, is repeated in the forms in which in successive ages the great

antagonist power is set forth. The writers of Scripture have but one idea of what will save humanity, the rule of the King who can reign in righteousness. "Behold a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." (Isaiah xxxii. 1, 2.) These writers have but one idea of what will ruin humanity, and wreck all the hope of heaven—Babel; confusion. The confusion of man's self-willed schemes and self-directed force, counterworking the Divine. The reign of the Lord is the burden of all the joy-notes of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. The folly, the wrong, the misery of Babel is the burden of its deepest notes of wailing and despair; from the hour when the tower of man's vanity and pride began to rise on the plains of Shinar, to the hour when the voice of the mighty angel shall be heard from on high, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen. Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

There is unity too, a very remarkable unity, in the description of the great antagonist reign to the Divine. "Babel"; "Babylon"; "Babylon the Great". I think that it is impossible to resolve this unity into a mere case of imitation, when we consider how the ideas which are thus represented run through the texture of human history; and how much there was in the history of Babylon and Babylon the Great which, while it explains their relations, was absolutely beyond the natural ken of

Isaiah and St. John. That we may understand this relation fully, it is worth while to read together three great passages from the Bible,—great in the splendour of the rhetorical and imaginative power which they exhibit; and greater still in the magnitude of the matters with which they concern themselves, and the fruit which they have borne in human history. In themselves they are masterpieces of expression; men would delight in them as among the choicest gems of the world's literature, if they did not happen to be gems from the Book of God.

“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.”—Genesis xi. 1—9.

“And it shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, that thou shalt take

up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased ! the golden city ceased ! The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet : they break forth into singing. Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming : it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth ; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we ? art thou become like unto us ? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols : the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning ! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations ! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God : I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north : I will ascend above the heights of the clouds ; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms ; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof ; that opened not the house of his prisoners ? All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit ; as a carcase trodden under feet. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people : the seed of evildoers shall never be renowned. Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers ; that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities. For I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of Hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the Lord. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water :

and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts."—Isaiah xiv. 3—23.

"And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power ; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works : in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her : for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine ; and she shall be utterly burned with fire : for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, *Alas, alas* that great city Babylon, that mighty city ! for in one hour is thy judgment come. . . . Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets ; for God hath avenged you on her. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee ; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee ; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee ; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee ; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee :

for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth."—Rev. xviii. 1—10; 20—24.*

Now here, we must admit, is a very remarkable unity, and it reaches far deeper than the name. There is a tone of bitter sarcasm in each passage, which is peculiar in Scripture. They share something in this respect with each other, which is in a measure peculiar to themselves. There is the assertion concerning each form of Babel, that it was made the instrument of human pride of power in defying the Most High God and aiming at His supremacy. There is further, in the case of Babylon and Babylon the Great, a strain of burning indignation because of the woes, the miseries, the wrongs, of which Babel is the parent; and then, in tones of exulting triumph, hardly to be matched in any pæan, there is the prophecy of its utter final and shameful overthrow. These poets, at the interval of ages, saw an element in this great antagonist to the reign of God which led them to attach to it this distinguishing name. Whatever others might see, they saw Babel in it—confusion;† and it was the doom and desolation of Babel which, in strains as lofty as ever breathed from human lips, they prophesied to the world. The name was ready made to Isaiah's hands. But it is impossible to read his

* I quote these passages from the authorized version, which is singularly powerful, and on the whole faithful. Nothing in my argument turns on the minute points in which it here and there fails.

† I do not here enter into the question as to the true origin of the name; there is no doubt as to what it represented to the Jews.

magnificent triumphal hymn, without recognizing how he saw in Babylon the essential characteristics of that Antichrist whose power and impiety culminate in Babylon the Great.

And these poets, like the true poet in all ages, were seers. Like Balaam, the man "whose eye was open," they saw what was veiled from common sight. The poet sees things in unity of which others see only the diversities. He sees the roots of things, as well as the branches, leaves, and fruits. Diverse as to our eyes are Babel, Babylon, and Babylon the Great, these poets treat them as identical, and we know therefore that at heart they are one. There is nothing about which the world is so unbelieving as about this seeing faculty of the poet; and, considering the multitude of pretenders to the faculty, one can scarcely wonder at it. But the power of insight is nevertheless a reality, an endowment of the loftiest minds. Goethe *saw* that the skull of a vertebrate animal is but a moulded vertebra. He saw the principle which is the key to the morphology of plants; he saw, and said, on the very night of the defeat of the Germans at Valmy by the ragged revolutionary forces of France,— "From this place, and to-day, begins a new epoch in the world's history." It is wise to listen reverently to men of imaginative genius when they speak of things which are hidden from common sight. There are those to whom it is given, as it were, to enter intellectually into that which is within the veil, and to see there the meeting-point of lines which to us may seem hardly even con-

vergent. They look down on things from a height, and see relations which to those on the level remain undisclosed. They are nearer, in a word, to the point from which God looks at them, who sees all things in the central unity, the Word by whom He made the worlds. The poet's function is to see relations and unities in the sphere of thought and spirit; and when a man of supreme genius is instructing us, is disclosing a unity in things apparently diverse which does not strike our sight, we listen to one who is revealing realities, things that are, though we cannot see them; and we accept his revelations trustfully, as we accept those of the naturalist who tells us what he sees, though again we cannot see it, in the material world.

Now it is just the men of the loftiest genius,—Moses, David, Isaiah, St. Paul, St. John,—the men in whom this natural faculty is royally developed, whom the Lord elects to be the inspired organs of His higher communications to mankind. Balaam was a man of splendid natural genius, and God took him and made him the organ of communications which “the vision of the Almighty” alone could reveal. So here; these were men of profoundly penetrating genius, of glorious poetic faculty; they were able to grasp the thought of the unity, and to see many of its most important bearings; but the thing itself was wholly beyond their unaided vision, and was brought within its range by that which, in connection with the Scripture, we must strenuously contend for, the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

But what is this unity, which led the recorder of

this ancient tradition, the poet-prophet of Jerusalem, and the poet-prophet of the Church, to see a common character in things so widely different, so far apart in time, place, and circumstance? Why should they write against Babel in its various forms as the most menacing foe to the Church in the eras in which they prophesied—a foe which it demanded repeated and distinct interpositions of the strong hand of Jehovah to confound and to destroy? And what is the reason that the series rises in importance, that the Babylon of Isaiah is greater and more terrible than the Babel of Genesis, while the Babylon of John is Babylon the Great, in whose tremendous and utter overthrow the principle common to them all is to be destroyed for ever?

What was Babel? A few simple, ignorant herdsmen, filled with the terrible remembrance of one deluge, building themselves, as they were in the midst of a vast plain, a tower high enough to put them beyond the danger of a second? To many this seems to be a sufficient key to the history. But if we look a little more closely at the tradition, we shall see that it means something more. The fourth verse points to the organization of a society, the beginning of an empire, a resistance in some form to the Divine purpose that men should scatter themselves over the face of the earth. Perhaps Gen. x. 8—10, which speaks of Nimrod “beginning to be a mighty one in the earth,” may help us a step further. It is like groping in the dark, attempting to restore history out of these fragments of ancient records, and at present we must hold in

suspense our judgment as to the true character and development of our race in the earliest period of its history. But in the absence of sunlight we are glad of even faint beams of stars; and such are here, shining through the primeval night. This Nimrod looms largely in oriental tradition. His hunting before the Lord—there is much controversy as to the exact sense of the term—may safely be connected with his tyrannous rule over men. His association with Babel is significant,—Gen. x. 10. It is difficult with these hints, and they are no more, before us, not to connect Nimrod in some way with the enterprise of these Babel builders, and the tower with the establishment of the first tyranny of the oriental type in the post-diluvian world.

At any rate we may regard his kingdom as the complete development of the idea which moved the Babel builders to make themselves a name, to hold themselves together as an organized community, in self-confidence and in defiance of God. It was the repetition after the deluge of the great experiment of the family of Cain, to build cities, invent arts, and weld swords,—unbidden, unguided, and unblessed. Civilisation, in other words, based on human will and passion, with no tincture of a Divine life in it, no obedience to a Divine law. The tower was to be the despot's stronghold and the seat of his throne; round it he would gather the subject tribes who were waiting for a master; hence he would issue on his mighty man-huntings, his expeditions of spoil and conquest; and here he would lord it as a god over men.

The writer of this hoary tradition represents in keen scorn heaven affrighted at the enterprise, and holding counsel as to how it might be frustrated,—the Lord God going down to view this mighty tower which man had built to threaten His dominion, and then by a touch of His finger on a delicate nerve confounding it all, and scattering the builders abroad in enforced separation over the face of the earth. Whatever may be the ultimate truth which is behind this tradition of the confusion of tongues, there can be no doubt that the development of distinct races and nations is God's way of confounding the kind of unity which the Nimrods of this world seek to establish. This gives us a grand variety and multiformity in the limbs and organs of the great body, human society, instead of the vast monotonous world-empires, swayed by one despotic will, of which in all ages the Nimrods, Nebuchadnezzars, Alexanders, Cæsars, and Napoleons have dreamed. A world-dominion—this has been the idea—comprehending all the scattered tribes of man within the bosom of one empire, over which a man should reign, the *præsens* Jupiter, the earthly god.

The beginning of this enterprise was Babel. The purpose frustrated by the touch of the Divine hand was resumed and carried on for ages by the men who ruled in Babylon, and who claimed royal rights over “all peoples, nations, and languages which dwell in all the earth.” When Babylon was finally shattered, and the advent of the Redeemer established the spiritual as the ruling sphere, the adversary of the Divine reign transformed likewise

the nature and the aim of his endeavour. The effort has been through all the Christian ages to establish this earthly counterfeit of the Divine reign, through the spiritual and secular despotism of the Papal Church. I speak of this enterprise of evil, whose name in all its successive stages is Confusion, as the counterfeit of the reign of God. This is a point which needs fuller explanation, as it will elucidate the whole argument.

Men, it may be said, were surely right in clinging together, in organizing societies, in establishing some kind of social order, and aiming at some kind of social development. Most surely, that was precisely what God was seeking for man, and it is the aim of the Divine education of humanity as far as concerns our present sphere. But God begins the work deep down in the heart and conscience of individual men, where the Babel builders never care to begin it. In Abraham we have a witness of His method. He taught a man to know Him, to reverence His law, to regard His approval and the fulfilment of His will as the supreme ends of life. That man was to teach what God taught him to his sons. Knowledge of the Divine name, reverence for the Divine law, was to be the one firm basis of their family life. As the family grew into the nation, it was to have no other standing-ground. Its life would flourish in obedience to the Divine word, and wither in disobedience. God was to be the recognized King there, and all the heads of the State were to be but the intelligent ministers of His will. Then, when the Divine discipline of the nation was

completed, it was the purpose of God that this kingdom of which God's law was the recognized foundation, and God Himself the recognized head, should—through the mission of the Messiah, and of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, who prolongs and completes the Messiah's work—spread through the world.

This great universal kingdom of humanity, in which one law should be obeyed and one King should reign, was a thought of God as well as a dream of human hearts. But God's revealed will was the only basis on which it could rest, and God's spiritual rule over human hearts the only sceptre of its sway. And the Babel-builders of all ages, the first founders of the tower which was to reach to heaven, the Babylonian and the Roman world-rulers, and the head of the more profound and terrible despotism which has been swaying the destinies of Christendom for ages, and claiming to rule the destinies of the world, have aimed at realizing this universal empire with a human will at the basis of it, instead of the Divine. With no formal denial of God, or contempt of the Divine law, there has been a persistent tendency to substitute a man for God, and to claim for the decisions of a human judgment, and the fiat of a human will, that absolute, reverent submission which man owes and can healthfully pay to the Lord God alone. And this is the essential spirit of Confusion, on the plain of Shinar, in imperial Babylon, on the seven-hilled throne of the despotism of the Roman empire, and of the darker, deadlier despotism of the Roman Church.

I have spoken of Babel briefly. It was not needful to occupy much time in considering it; partly because the records are so meagre that there is little that is authentic to consider; and partly because Babel was developed into full form in Babylon, of which we have ample record, and will be illustrated by what we have to say of the spirit, aim, and influence of the great imperial despotism of the oriental world. Whether the tower was ever completed is one of the most vexed questions of primeval history. In spirit, at any rate, it became complete in Nimrod's empire, which remained under various dynasties, and whether at Nineveh or Babylon, one in character in all the ages, and reached its most splendid development under the sway of Nebuchadnezzar, in the sixth century before Christ. Of his character and his kingdom we have most graphic delineations, just because both are so profoundly characteristic. Babel grew into Babylon; Abraham's godly household grew into the sacred kingdom, the kingdom which was also a church; and then the great antagonism, which is the key to the drama of earth's history, began to unfold itself. There must be sharp contrast, antagonism, in all dramatic action. If earth's history be heaven's drama, the grand antagonism is here. Babylon and Zion; the reign of the priest through the arch-priest at Rome; and the reign of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus in Christian homes and Christian hearts.

When Babel perished and the confusion of tongues became complete,—the confusion must have taken place somehow, and by Divine ordinance, it enters

so essentially into God's plan of the education of mankind, in which strong varieties play such an important part,—Babylon appeared upon the scene. The next great act of the drama which we have the means of studying was being played out in Isaiah's days. Babylon was the fell antagonist of the spiritual kingdom, and the instrument of its material overthrow. It was doomed to physical death, that it might become capable of resurrection, and Babylon executed the sentence of doom. Through the whole prophetic era the great oriental empire, whatever its seat, hung like a burdened thunder-cloud around Israel, menacing the welfare and the very existence of the Church. It looms as the dark background against which the golden visions of the prophets glow with celestial splendour; it is the wrong against which their proclamation of right stands out in bold relief. It is, we may say, the flesh against which the spirit had to maintain the struggle, the evil which the heaven-born good in Zion had to put down and destroy. And here we get a vision of the mystery of life, physical and moral; the duality of the forms through which it manifests itself. But to trace this further would carry us into another sphere.

The question between Babel and the Church is stated in full form in the following words, which belong to Isaiah's day:—

“ ‘ Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria: Thus saith the king. . . . Beware lest Hezekiah per-

suade you, saying, The Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?

“Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria: this is the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning him; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. . . . Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest. . . . Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.”—Isaiah xxxvi.—vii.

There is the clear statement of the question; the god of earth against the God of heaven. As a god the Assyrian lorded it over men. As a god his subjects worshipped him. They knew none higher. The will of this awful monarch—the Great King—

was the one thing on which hung, as far as they could see, the destinies of mankind. The poet of the Augustan age, when he called the Emperor the present Jove, meant it profoundly. What did there appear to be on earth or in heaven superior to his will? The Russian peasant has pretty much the same idolatrous reverence for the Czar, whose very name is related not to Cæsar, but to the *Belshazzars* and *Nebuchadnezzars* of prophetic days. Rabshakeh but stated broadly and boldly what is behind all these arrogant attempts at a world-dominion, which repeat themselves through the ages; the will of a human despot, as the strongest thing, the thing most able to inspire and to justify confidence, on earth and in heaven. And it is this trust in man for what He made man to seek in Himself alone, which God will confound. We have seen how He confounded it at Babel; we will now see how Babylon fared in the strife.

We are able to trace the progress of Babylon towards universal empire in the pages of Scripture.* During the prophetic era Babylon was winning the empire which towards the close of that era was terribly destroyed. Each generation the shadow grew darker round Jerusalem; each new invasion

* It is worthy of note that the decline of Nineveh and the rise of Babylon to supreme influence in the East is coincident with an important progressive movement of civilisation. Babylon was more capable than Nineveh of becoming the vital centre of the world's secular life; and the movement of the centre of gravity of the East to Babylon meant closer contiguity and more frequent and fruitful intercourse among the civilised nations. The era of Nabonassar (B.C. 747), which must mark some great crisis in Babylonish development, may perhaps be looked upon as the starting-point of the higher civilisation of mankind.

seemed but to make the doom of the spiritual kingdom more sure. The physical power of Babylon grew mightily generation by generation; and with her growth two divine things declined and died in all the lands over which she ruled—the worship of the living God, and the sacredness of family and national life. Idolatry grows inevitably, *pari passu*, with such an empire. The king becomes naturally the god to the common herd—for the subjects of such an empire rise no higher than a mere herd of men. The Jews were not a mere herd, and could not be treated as a mere herd; and therefore the Babylonish and Roman empires honoured them with such a hearty hate. But under such a system family life, that heart's core of all vital human society, becomes degraded; and the bond of tribes, races, nations, shares the degradation. Men, tribes, peoples, are moved about like pawns on the chess-board of this great game of empire. A common measure of policy with these monarchs was the transplantation of whole peoples, heedless of the tears and miseries of the wretched victims of imperial state. (2 Kings xvii. 22—24.)

The more deeply we study the history of such godless tyrannies, the more profound becomes the conviction that their very essence is confusion—the confusion and overthrow of all which God has ordained as the basis and regulating principle of man's life. Isaiah saw this godless empire stretching its shadow over Zion; and his heart was torn with anguish when he saw that Zion, forsaking her trust, forgetting her ancient triumphs, was trem-

bling, and rushing into treacherous worldly alliances against her insolent and impious foe. Full of sorrow, full of care, as the shadow deepened he re-read the history of Babel. He saw how that mighty and imposing structure had been destroyed by one touch of the Almighty's finger. It stirred the muse within him almost to the pitch of frenzy. He poured forth in the name of the troubler of Babel defiance against this godless empire, the Antichrist of his day. Then in strains in which the sense of the inherent mightiness of spirit, and the inherent weakness of flesh, lent force to the hate of the patriot and the indignation of the man, he prophesied a kindred overthrow of Babylon, with all its pomp and splendour, at the hands of the avenging Lord:

“I will rise up against thee,
Saith Jehovah of Hosts.
I will destroy the name and race of Babel,
The child and the grandchild, saith Jehovah.
I will make it a hold for the porcupine,
A morass of stagnant water:
I will sweep it into the rubbish of desolation,
Saith Jehovah of Hosts.”

Babylon fell like Babel, but the spirit lived on. Jerusalem fell in turn, but the spirit of the elect nation lived on in the Christian Church. “But ye,” says St. Peter, “are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.” Society at the advent of Christ assumed a new character, or rather, I should say, it was raised

bodily to a higher level. It was like the lifting of a veil of mist around the horizon. The mists parted, the vapours vanished, and man's secular life was thenceforth seen to be in the very heart of all the interests and activities of the spiritual, eternal world. We sometimes say, describing the change, that at the Advent the reign of God became a spiritual reign. We speak foolishly. It has always been a spiritual reign, and nothing but a spiritual reign. But up to that time earthly limits had bounded to the eye of sense its visible theatre; then the limit was abolished, and man everywhere, in all his relations, interests, and activities, was seen to be at the very centre of the realm of God. The two great antagonists, whose warfare thus far we have traced, then carry their conflict into the higher sphere. The Church in the largest sense becomes the theatre of human development, and within the bosom of the Church the anti-Christian power seeks once more in a higher but more perilous form, to counterwork the Lord. It is in the Church, in the very heart of the most heavenly thing which the earth holds, and which God ordained to be the light of its night and the salt of its life, that we have to trace the operation of the anti-Christian power, in adulterating the truth and destroying the energy by which the Lord is ever seeking to save the world.

Constantine was the Nimrod of the Church. Dante's keen insight traced to its true source the woe and degradation which the wealth of the Church has wrought to the whole Christian world. Constantine was the ruler who first formally or-

ganized the Church after a worldly fashion, and established a worldly power on its throne. But it is important that we should understand that in this matter Constantine was but a minister; he but gave form and constitution to tendencies which were already working, and necessities which had already become imperious. The corruption had been at work for ages which took form and force under Constantine's hand. The priest had been busy before the Emperor, and the priest is the fundamental Antichrist. A man's authority in place of the Divine word; a monarch's rule, you may call him bishop if you like, instead of the fellowship and co-operation of a band of brethren, and ritual splendour in place of the life and the light of the Gospel,—these are the true Babel-builders of the Christian Church. Babylon concerned this world's society only,—that is visibly; really it comprehended the two worlds after its fashion, as the record in Daniel iii. reveals. And it is true of every purely secular system. It cannot remain purely secular. Seeking to claim the whole human sphere for secular principles and secular aims, it is driven by an inexorable necessity, as we see in the case of the great apostle of Positivism, to attempt religious legislation, and to deal with man as a being whose culminating interests lift themselves into the spiritual world—the world of worship, homage, and faith. But the main interest and activity of the Babylonish despotism was in the secular sphere. We come forth into a wider world when we deal with the history and policy of Babylon the Great.

Babylon the Great grew inevitably out of the priestly idea of the ministry of the Gospel, and its co-ordinate doctrine, the principle of sacramental grace. Wherever, in whatever Church, the chief stress is laid on the administration of a material sacrament by a human priest, as the channel of Divine influence, the conductor of heavenly grace to the human soul, then there is fellowship of spirit with the Antichrist who reigns at Rome. And this new Babel occupies a wider range, and comprehends man's secular and spiritual interests avowedly in its despotic dominion; it endeavours in both spheres to be to him as God. Hence the epithet "Great" applied to it. Great, because it aims at the double dominion, because it claims the empire of both worlds. It fills a far vaster sphere, and courts a more disastrous and utter overthrow at last.

Very early in the history of Christendom the attempt began to be made to organize a spiritual kingdom, which should aim at the complete regulation of man's relationships and life, on the "I will" of man, in contempt of that direct spiritual relationship which Christ established between Himself and each individual member of His mystical body, the Church. I have seen the statement, on what appeared to be competent authority, but I am not physiologist enough to judge of its truth, that what are called the great nerves are really but bundles of distinct nervous filaments, which convey the impressions from each portion of the surface of the body, by independent telegraphic communication to the brain. So that each portion of living flesh, if this

be true, has independent relations with the head. It is a wonderful image of the spiritual body, the Church; each member of which, as the prime condition and necessary effect of membership, maintains direct and personal relations with Christ the Lord. But very early in history, for reasons and from causes which I have traced in a former chapter on the Infallible Church, the attempt began to be made to override this relationship, to substitute the rule of some visible and tangible human authority in its room, and to make the "spiritual" an instrument of dominion over the hearts, the consciences, and the lives of men. The dominion aimed at, first under the hand of the Christian priesthood, but drawing gradually to a head under the arch-priest of Christendom at Rome, was the counterpart of Babel. It violated all the national and domestic relationships and interests of men, marring the simplicity and purity of homes, staining the marriage bond, thrusting an alien hand between parent and child, claiming at length supreme authority over the nations, treating kings as its puppets and realms as its glebe; rising at length, like the kings of old, to arrogant and blasphemous assumption, establishing idolatry as a help to infirmity, and ending at length in becoming the idol—for the word "Our Lord God the Pope" has been heard in the Christian world, and the head of the system is now held to speak with the infallible voice of God at Rome. And thus Christ is literally cast out of Christendom, and human authority supplants the Almighty and Allwise in the government of His world.

And St. John, the prophet poet of the Church,—that is the society of human souls living in loving harmony and fellowship with Christ the spiritual King,—foresaw, as Isaiah foresaw in his day, the shadow of this Babylon the Great, this incarnation of human authority and power, stretching darkly around the little community which bore as in a sacred ark the world's hope in its breast. Paul too had his vision of the dark shadow before he passed to his rest. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." (1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3.)

But to John its development was more fully disclosed. He saw it, like Babylon of old, engrossing all the world's riches, and wreathing all its splendour around its brow; and he too looked back and took counsel of the hoary fragment of the eldest poetry of the world. He saw how a structure as imposing, as menacing to the Lord's supremacy as the King of men, as was Rome to Christ's supremacy as the head of His body the Church, melted and vanished at the touch of God's finger; while the poet, who is Heaven's chronicler, sang scornfully the song of its overthrow. And he modelled a triumphal hymn of a kindred exulting and contemptuous strain, to be at once a hymn of hope to the Church during the

ages of priestly rule in Christ's kingdom, and her pæan of victory in the hour when, "consumed by the breath of His mouth, and destroyed by the brightness of His coming," Babylon the Great should go down to perdition, and the name and the race of Babel should perish for ever from the world. "Alas! alas! that great city Babylon! that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come."

The critical question of the identification of Rome, pagan or papal, with Babylon the Great, seems really to lie within a very narrow compass. To those who find prophecy of any sort incredible, the question is of course foreclosed. But to those who see that the Bible is full of prophecy, that the whole Old Testament dispensation was a prophecy, that the primeval sentence on man was a prophecy, the question is open, Does this description of the Apocalypse apply to pagan or papal Rome, or both? To both, in a measure, will we imagine be the answer of most intelligent students of the Book. But that Rome papal is pourtrayed in some of the most striking and impressive features of the description, seems to be beyond all reasonable doubt. The fifth verse of the seventeenth chapter introduces the name: "And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery; Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots and the abominations of the earth." The eighteenth verse of the same chapter speaks of the woman as a great city: "And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which hath kingdom over the kings of the earth." The ninth verse identifies the city plainly with Rome: "The seven heads are seven moun-

tains, where the woman sitteth upon them." That Rome papal is chiefly indicated seems to be evident from the spiritual bearing of the terms employed. The term "Mystery" points distinctly to spiritual evil, and the word harlot to spiritual apostacy. There seems to be no fair way of escaping from the conclusion that under the image of the woman clothed in scarlet, and the name Babylon the Great, we have pourtrayed the despotism of Papal Rome.

But the main force of the argument, after all, will lie in the spiritual likeness, if we can trace it. Let us examine how the idea which we have traced through Babel and oriental Babylon, re-embodies itself, and rises to the highest form of worldly pride and grandeur, in the Papal Church. The one was the direct and arrogant infringement of God's prerogative in the government of society. The other is as directly, as daringly, the infringement of Christ's prerogative in the government of the Church. In Babel a human society was formed which dispensed with God. In Rome a Christian society was founded which dispensed with Christ—not with the name, but with all that Christ means to sin-tormented human hearts. It is a strong term—dispensed with Christ, for in truth nothing can be more orthodox than the Roman creeds concerning the person and mission of the Saviour. But wherever the one Mediator between God and man is supposed to need mediators between Himself and man; wherever one human heart in the universe, be it of Virgin or Saint, is supposed to yearn more tenderly over human needs, and to stoop more pitifully to human weak-

ness, than Christ's, there, I hold, whatever the creeds may be, you have really a Christless Church.

In Babylon the monarch was practically a present Deity to his subjects; living, they feared him, and dead they worshipped him as divine. The ruler of Babylon the Great has become practically the object of religious reverence to his spiritual subjects, and the only incarnation which some of them ever dream of, of the Divine idea. Both exhibit the direct and determined attempt to substitute the fiat of man for the fiat of God in the government of the world. Hard have they laboured in both Babylons to make that fiat successful. The sweat of the brow, the blood of the heart, of millions has been freely lavished on that altar. "Thou hast destroyed thy land and slain thy people," is the prophet's charge against the Babylonish despotism. We fear that the same charge lies as absolutely against the system of the Papal Church. She has ever been reckless of bloodshed when her interests have demanded it. Unity, that is uniformity, has ever been held by her as incomparably more important than human anguish and the waste of life. "Neither sex, nor age, nor rank, have we spared," writes the leader of the crusade against the Albigenses. "We have put all alike to the sword." The army of the Bishop of Citeaux, in the same war, won the entrance to Beziers. The difficulty was to know the heretics. "Slay them all," said the Bishop; "the Lord will know His own."

In Babylon, the will of a finite and fallible man became the rule of right and the fountain of law.

In Rome, the judgment of a fallible mortal claims infallibility, and his decree challenges the same obedience as God's. I care not in either case how wise the man may be, or how good. A good despot can no more supply the place of God in the system of the State or the Church than a bad one. The better the man, the more does the sense of the burden crush him, and the more are men tempted to look to him for that absolute guidance which neither he nor any man can possibly offer to one human heart. The evil lies in the nature of the enterprise, and not in the nature of the men who attempt it. Do not let us mistake the matter. We must not imagine that the great kings in Babylon were men who set themselves systematically to despoil and to oppress mankind. Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Cyrus, were men of large mind and earnest purpose, fully possessed with the sense of the tremendous responsibilities of their position, and we may well imagine that they spent many an anxious and sleepless hour in devising schemes for the welfare of their realms. And among the Popes of Rome have been some of the wisest, ablest, and most devoted of mankind. There is not a nobler or grander figure in the history of his century, of many centuries, than Gregory the Great. There have been men among the Popes who have groaned under the burden of this awful dominion, and have striven earnestly and unselfishly to rule as Fathers of the Christian world. Many a fair vision of what a world might be under the reign of a Vicar of the Lord Jesus has floated before the sight of the great

teachers and leaders of the Roman Church. Here is one: "When all temporal sovereignties shall be put an end to, and the Vicar of Christ shall rule over the whole earth, there shall be in the world one flock and one pastor, and the age of gold sung by the poets shall be realized, with the perfect republic described by philosophers, the state of innocence of the patriarchs, and the felicity of Jerusalem delivered from the hands of heretics and infidels. And this shall take place when, all mundane principalities being set aside, the Vicar of Christ alone shall reign supreme throughout the world." But it is not in man to realize it. It is not of Pope or priest that the glorious prophecy was uttered, "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness and princes shall rule in judgment; and a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

And the inevitable issue of the attempt of a man, a succession of men, an order of men, to wield Christ's authority, and to be as Christ to their fellow-men, is the confusion of all authority, and that dark atheism, mother of dire despair, which has settled on the nations which have drunk most deeply of the wine-cup of Roman harlotries, paralyzing for a time their nobler life. Our charge against Rome, and the priestly power and influence in Christendom of which Rome is the organ, is not that of a deliberate and wilful attempt to oppress and tyrannize over the nations. Pio Nono has a true fatherly heart, and has the simplest, most credulous belief

that entire submission to his will would be for their good, is indeed the way to the good which God has appointed for them. It is not needful to our argument to suppose that the power of which we speak is used systematically for base and selfish purposes. No doubt the temptation to the shameful abuse of such power is tremendous. The nepotism of churchmen has passed into a proverb. And there is a terrible charge of abuse of power urged by history against the rulers of the Papal Church. But, alas! I see the same tendency too plainly in all Churches, in all lands, in all ages, to make it the main ground of special complaint against any.

No! I take my stand on what many a bitter anti-papal controversialist would regard as much lower and weaker ground. I say that the effort must fail miserably, under the highest possible conditions, as well as under the lowest. Granted a succession of the wisest, purest, and most energetic rulers in the high places of the Church, still the dictum of man's authority—except so far as the truth shall commend it to the people who have the right and the power to judge of the truth—in those things which God hath promised to take by His Spirit and show to humble believing hearts, is the very principle of confusion. It keeps men for a time in a base tutelage, and then it provokes them to fierce rebellion. It paralyzes the organ of spiritual insight; it chokes the channels of Divine communion; it releases man from the hand which alone can rule him, and binds him in abject dependence on a hand which, as it ever must mock his hope, he must learn

to hate. It robs God of His honour, Christ of His kingdom, the world of the principle of divine order, and man of his highest glory and his chiefest crown.

Very instructive too is it to trace the parallel yet further. The great Babylonish tyranny of old was fearfully cruel and destructive. The will which has to deal with and to move great masses of men inevitably in time gets cruel. The history of all tyrannies reveals the demoralizing effect of absolute rule even on the very noblest natures, and the penalty falls on their subjects. It was not by the will of a cruel ruler only,—Nebuchadnezzar, for instance, seems to have been naturally a wise, clement, and far-sighted monarch,—but by the inevitable tendency of things, that these great despotisms cost so much bitter suffering to the world. These men, like a despot who is now expiating in misery and shame his reckless contempt of the higher interests of his people, had a vast dreamy object before them. They set themselves to establish a grand uniform world dominion, before which souls, families, nations, were but as gnats that buzz in the summer air, to be swept, if needful, as ruthlessly to death. Juggernath's bloody car was never splashed with such crimson stains as the chariot wheels of Babylonish State. Who shall measure the great sea of agony through which even a Darius or a Cyrus waded to their thrones? Hence, because of the cry of human anguish which filled the air, as these great world-conquerors crushed on to their triumphs, the prophet sings with such

fierce exultation the song of their tremendous overthrow.

It is needless to detain the reader by detailed proofs of the persecuting spirit of Rome. The topic is too familiar. Every city has its spot sacred to its martyrs. But, as I have argued in a preceding chapter, this is not the fruit of pure blood-thirstiness in the rulers of the Church. Some of the mildest and ablest of the Pontiffs have issued the most terrible edicts of destruction. The true test of a system is not what it suffers its worst, but what it compels its best, men to do or to allow. Men full of human tenderness in the high places of the Church, have wept bitterly over the miseries which they felt compelled, by a system which they thoroughly believed in, to inflict on their fellow-men. The policy is forced on such men by the dire necessities of their position; by the effort of a weak human will to make such order, harmony, and unity on earth as befit a Divine reign. The Church has always solemnly professed that it was in mercy to souls in peril that she drew the sword. As I have said already, I dare not believe that all those solemn affirmations are lies. But who made the souls dependent on her mercy? Where is the Divine commission which makes Rome, or any organization which may call itself a Church, responsible for the peace, the order, the unity of the world? It is the Lord's charge, and the Lord's alone; and by His Word and His Spirit, working in men's hearts to will and to do of His good pleasure, He is slowly but surely accomplishing it. Forging the com-

mission, Rome has put her hand to a work which tasks even the strength of Christ; and the end of it, the dark, inevitable end, is confusion, bloody cruelty, wasting, and death. And because of the seas of blood which were surging before his prophetic sight, because of the cry of souls under the altar which was ringing in his ear, because of enslaved nations, degraded homes, and murdered souls, the seer of Patmos stirs up his spirit to rival Isaiah's fierce and indignant strains: "Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God, who judgeth her." (Rev. xviii. 6, 7, 8.)

It would be interesting to trace in detail, did my space allow, how, both in Babylon and in Babylon the Great, idolatry and the dishonour of the most sacred human relations have followed this attempt of finite and fallible man to play to his fellow-man the part of God. That Church, which has filled Europe with sacred images, which has branded marriage as tolerable only in laics, while it is pollution in priests, which has thrust an alien hand between ruler and subject, parent and child, the disciple on earth and the Master in heaven, has nothing to learn from Babylon of the art of en-

slaving, degrading, despoiling, and destroying men. And as Babel at one end of the chain, and Babylon the Great at the other, diverse as they are in form, are one in origin, one in aim, one in spirit, so shall they be one in destiny.

I should be entering on a very wide subject did I attempt to trace the agencies and influences by which the great modern Babylonish despotism is being overthrown and brought to nought. But as I have been tracing unities throughout the whole of this essay, I must indicate one more remarkable unity before I close. Babel was overthrown by the touch of the Lord's finger on the nerves of speech, according to the ancient tradition which the Book of Genesis records. But even for those who reject the ancient tradition, and hold it to be inconsistent with what they believe to be well-established facts in the history of human development, it still remains true that the dispersion of mankind, the breaking up of the original family into diverse groups, which in time became races, each with its own language, customs, and type of character, frustrated that hope which was conceived in the heart of the builders of Babel, and which every great world-conqueror has endeavoured in vain to fulfil. Strong nationality is the masterful antagonist of these world-embracing despotisms. The Jews, for instance, long stood sternly in the way of Babylonian and Roman world-dominion; and it is by the irresistible tendency of such national elements to disintegrate and to form new combinations, that these vast empires are overthrown.

It is precisely by similar agencies, working through the ages, that Babylon the Great has been shaken, and shall finally be brought to nought. The principle of nationality on a large scale, and of family life on a small scale, are the fell antagonists of Rome. The beginning of the shaking of Rome's dominion was the first development of a truly national spirit in the countries of modern Europe in the thirteenth century. Thence you must date the movements which led to the Reformation. It was not God's will that any of these tremendous despotisms should lord it successfully over the world. The Babylonish, the Medo-Persian, the Greek, the Roman, made the attempt in succession. When the hand of Providence broke up the Roman Empire, it planted the seeds of vigorous independent nationalities in the broad realms over which it ruled. During the dark ages, of which the tenth century was perhaps the darkest, these young nations were growing to maturity; and during their minority the Papal tyranny lorded it supremely, and not altogether malignly, over the world. In the thirteenth century the nations of the West discovered that they were nations. They knew then that they were men. The vernacular language became then sufficiently developed to be the vehicle of a truly national literature, and it broke the bondage of the Latin, the ecclesiastical language of Rome. The kings of that century, of whom St. Louis and Edward the First are noble specimens, completed the mastery of their own subjects, and made one law supreme throughout their realms. In the same age the

Commons fairly appear upon the scene as honourable members of the State, and take their recognized share in the management of public affairs. And that thirteenth century, the age of the birth of nations, of languages, of literatures, of liberties, witnessed the first serious shaking of the Papal kingdom. Early in the fourteenth century the able but profligate Philip le Bel voided the Papal chair by brutal violence to Boniface VIII., one of the strongest of the Popes. Then began the Papal schism, which the Roman writers mourn over as the seventy years' captivity; and then, early in the next century, came the Council of Constance, which left the course clear for the Reformation.

There can be little question, we imagine, that the strong national feeling and character of the Teutonic and Scandinavian nations inclined them to embrace the cause of the Reformation. Strong national awakenings are ever fatal to the Roman tyranny. Constitutionalism in Austria leads at once to the modification, then to the abrogation of the Concordat. The uprising of a great people in Italy laid them at once under the ban of the Church. The Spanish revolution has robbed the Church at one blow of the moral and material support of the Spanish people; and the Republic or Constitutional Monarchy which seems to be impending in France, as the outcome of this tremendous struggle, whatever else it may break or save, seems likely to burst the bonds of the Papal yoke for ever.

When the earth was of one speech, the first Babel enterprise was attempted. It was when all intel-

lectual Europe was of one speech—the Latin, the ecclesiastical tongue—that the Roman Church established its dominion. When nations began to have their own languages, their own thoughts, above all when they were able to read, through vernacular versions of the Bible, in their own tongue the wonderful works of God, the spell of the Church was broken, its universal empire was destroyed. The growth of nations in knowledge, in liberty, in industry, will complete the work of destruction. The fundamental element in the prosperity of a nation is the strength of the family bond, the purity of the family life. Just as the growth of nations on a large scale is the deadly antagonist of the Roman despotism, so the development of the family life is on a small scale the deadly antagonist of the arts and the influence of the priest. Let family life be strong and noble in a nation, and there is absolutely no room for the priestly power. What is the strength of Ritualism at this moment? What but the vanity and luxury which kill the nobler life of homes at one end of the scale of society, and the mass of festering misery which we leave untouched to degrade and destroy it at the other. Souls weary of the frivolity and hollowness of our home-life and our state-life, or crushed by its misery, fall easy captives to the priestly yoke. But a great shaking, a great uprising of nations is coming, has come. Germany—Rationalist, infidel Germany, as we have been taught to call her—is shaken to the centre by the call of a great duty, by the strain of a great struggle; and now men are bending the knee and worshipping,

and Luther's grand old hymn rolls out with the emphasis of millions of beating hearts upon it, through the length and breadth of the land. God send us, God send to all peoples, some great shock which shall stir us to the depths, which shall make us ashamed and humble, but trustful and strong. God purify the hearts and the homes of Christendom by the breath of His Spirit and the truth of His word, and give us to see the last wrecks of the Papal, the priestly despotism vanishing from the world.

But it is idle to suppose that the overthrow of a system, however thorough that overthrow may be, will purge the world of the spirit which animated it, and lent to it all its power to trouble mankind. We have seen how the spirit which was cast out at Babel, re-embodied itself in Babylon; and when Babylon fell, found for itself a new and yet mightier organ of influence—first in Rome, and then in the system which the seer of the Apocalypse names Babylon the Great. The Roman system is now manifestly hastening to its fall. The Catholic nations are gradually revealing an interior weakness which contrasts very strikingly with the interior strength and elasticity of the Protestant nations, as the two are brought under the testing strain of our modern life. The Papacy itself has committed probably that last act of madness which precedes perdition. The whole system decayeth and waxeth old, and is ready to vanish away. The signs of senescence in Rome are conspicuous enough; but in sober truth we must confess that the signs are far from clear that the spirit which

animates the Roman system, and is the essential Antichrist, is about speedily to vanish from the world.

We can hardly yet have come to the end of all which the principle of authority can offer for the spiritual guidance of mankind. Cast out from Rome, we may expect that it will assume in future more subtle and spiritual forms of manifestation. It is highly improbable that a vast organization analogous to the Roman, can ever again rear itself in Christendom as the visible form of its unity. Such things are not made; they grow. And their growth is the work of ages, under conditions which are wholly wanting now, and are never likely to recur. We question whether any schemes of comprehension on a national or on a Catholic scale lie in the line of our present and future progress. The tendencies of the times are against them. The world less and less wants and cares to behold a great visible institution which it can call a Church. It seeks itself to become the Church, by manifesting the Christian mind and spirit in all the forms and expressions of its life. And the spirit of Antichrist will follow the world's development; it will always be found working in a certain concord with prevalent ideas.

Perhaps, as with the kingdom, we are wrong in saying of it too absolutely, Lo here! Lo there! We think we have it in Babel, in Babylon, and in Babylon the Great. But there is danger in supposing that these manifestations contain and exhaust its energy in any age of the world. They simply manifest its most concentrated form. They are the

heart of its movement, but the limbs are everywhere. It is a spirit which is abroad almost as widely as the light and the life of the kingdom. It infects all Churches, it besets all souls. The Churches which most formally disown the spirit of authority, as the Independents do, have their own forms of temptation to put themselves under the yoke. The creeds of the Church, the habits and "views" of the Church, become an authoritative guidance to the indolent and careless. Just in the proportion in which these habits and views cease to be helps to intelligent spiritual conviction, and become the rule of thought and the law of action, the spirit of Antichrist is at work in that Church, and God writes Babel, Confusion, on its life.

This is, and is likely long to continue, the standing difficulty of Christendom. All men have not faith. A great multitude, we may say, lack either the intelligence or the moral earnestness which alone lend worth to conviction. So each Church has its system organized and stereotyped with more or less elaboration and rigidity; and this, rather than the mind and spirit of the Master, which is the true Gospel of the kingdom, is insensibly put forth as the manifestation of Christ to the world. Radically, perhaps, Antichrist is the putting before the world the system of a Church, its ideas and methods, as the truth which men are to receive, and the path by which they are to walk, instead of that spirit which made Christianity a quickening, purifying life in the apostolic age. Think what Christianity really seems, and must seem, to those who gather their

knowledge of it from such a system as that of the Anglican Church. Compare it under the most favourable aspects with the spirit which once regenerated society, of which the Acts of the Apostles contains the revelation, and perhaps it will not seem so wonderful that the great mass of our toiling classes in England repel, if they do not scoff at, the claim of the Gospel to the allegiance of their hearts.

I can fancy an Evangelical Nonconformist gladdening himself by the thought that his Church system is happily free from the worst, at any rate, of these disfiguring blemishes which mar the work of the Establishment. But how much visible vanity, pride, selfishness, vain-glory, covetousness, enter into our Church operations in Nonconformist Churches? And yet we expect men to accept the light which as Churches we offer to them, as the purest manifestation of the mind and spirit of Christ which is extant in our world. It is this claiming a sacred sanction for the whole system and life of a religious community, and treating it as having a certain holiness apart from the spirit which is actually manifested, which is the gravest obstacle to the spread of the kingdom of Heaven.

Could we but be as honest in the discovery and confession of our own moral defects and sins, as we are in discerning them in sister Churches or in the world outside; could we say frankly to men, There is very much mixed up with our life, our Church beliefs, habits, and operations, which is not at all Christian by Christ's standard, and ought

never to be called Christian; could we tell them plainly that it is only what purity, truth, unselfishness, unworldliness, and divine charity are in us, which have anything to do with Christ, and have any claim to be regarded as His self-manifestation to mankind;—then it seems to me that we should be in the fair way to win men by throngs to the kingdom, and might cherish the hope of casting the name and the race of Babel for ever out of the world. It is in this direction that the future field of battle against Antichrist awaits us. Its last entrenchment will be raised in the very heart of the most Christian institutions and communities. When it is cast out thence, the victory over Babel will be for ever won.

POSTSCRIPT.—It will be seen that I have not in this Essay entered on the question of the authorship of the various prophecies which are attributed to Isaiah. I have never seen any valid reason for doubting the truth of the received opinion. The best recent criticism, in spite of the wild speculations of the Oxford commentary, just published, seems to tend in the direction of the old belief in the unity of the book. But even if, as some accomplished critics have suggested, the picture in the 14th chapter refers rather to Assyria under the name of Babylon than to Babylon proper,—Assyria being the formidable power in Isaiah's days,—my argument would be rather strengthened than otherwise.

The Christian Commonwealth.

The Christian Commonwealth.

ONE of the most striking and significant features of our times is the growing interest in ecclesiastical questions which characterizes our best thinkers, as compared with the doctrinal controversies whose interest was in the ascendant a generation ago. There is almost an impatience of doctrinal discussions even in Evangelical circles; while questions regarding the Church, its nature, constitution, and relation to the great world around, occupy the attention of classes whose main interest hitherto has attached itself to the secular sphere. We are entering, or rather have entered, without question, on stormy ecclesiastical times. Controversies are already opened which will lead us to search down to the very foundations of the Christian State. Hitherto we have allowed our ideas of the Christian State to haunt a vague and shadowy region. It will be possible no longer; they must take definite form, and appear. What is meant by the Christian Commonwealth? What is the Church, what is the State, in a community which recognizes Christ as

its head, and is living in the light, and inhaling the breath of the life, which He brought into the world? These are questions which in the coming years will be keenly debated, not only in the philosophical and theological schools, and in the more dignified political assemblies, but on the hustings, in crowded public meetings, in daily papers, in workmen's clubs, and wherever Englishmen meet together to talk over the great questions of the times. The most profound and pregnant themes are about to become the popular ones, and the discussion of them will do more to educate the people in the highest sense, and, let us hope, to restore the hold of Christianity on the hearts and consciences of the great mass of our working population, than anything which has happened in the sphere of our national experience since the great Methodist revival a hundred years ago.

There will be no possibility of ignoring religious questions during these coming years; of putting them aside scornfully as matters which concern chiefly those whom the scorners call "silly women and idle priests." They must be studied and handled even by secular politicians, for on them the fate of Ministries and the following of great party leaders will turn. Is it too much to hope that, when men are compelled to look into them, they will find no means of escape from the conclusion to which all history leads the way, that on them for weal or for woe man's destiny hinges; that in them are to be found the ruling powers of man's development, not as a spirit only, a being whose citizenship

is in an unseen world, but as a thinker and worker in the present—a mortal man, with home, friends, duties, occupations, possessions, pleasures, hopes, and loves, which relate him as closely to this material sphere as the brutes that perish; while he works his way through the things seen and temporal to all that God has awaiting him beyond. It needs only, one would hope, that an open eye should be brought to bear on religious questions to secure their recognition as the most powerful factors in the conduct of life and the structure of society. This return of religion, so to speak, to the secular sphere, is surely the one thing which is needed to restore it to its ancient place at the head of the progress of mankind.

The object of the present chapter is not to discuss fully a matter so large and so rich in interest as the Christian commonwealth;—for that a great book would be needed, and a great mastery of a wide range of thought. My purpose is rather to lay down one very important principle which seems to me to lie near the very heart of the matter; a just comprehension of which will perhaps afford to some a kind of clue through the maze of a most perplexing and intricate subject. It may possibly clear up a little confusion in some minds as to the relations of State and Church, of things secular and things spiritual; which relations are likely to be in the very forefront of our public questions for many years to come.

The principle is this. God has given to us the essential form of the Christian commonwealth in

His word. The Jewish state is the state which He organized and set forth as an example of political life to all mankind.

Some may be startled by the word Christian state in connection with a thing so entirely belonging to an old world, to a condition of things which has utterly passed away, as the Jewish State or Church—whichever we may elect to call it. There is a strong set at present against Old Testament institutions, facts, and principles, among many of our most earnest and competent Christian teachers. The feeling which I have heard somewhat widely expressed is, that the less we trouble ourselves about Judaism, and the Old Testament world generally, the better. It is not our world, it is said; we are under another and a diviner law; and the less we mix ourselves up with its spirit and its ways, the better we shall prosper. I am persuaded, on the other hand, that we have nothing to gain, but everything to lose, by thus cutting ourselves off from the historical development of the Church. Judaism is as full of importance and interest to us, as childhood is to manhood; and we shall do well to remember that it is the childhood of *our* manhood, and not of some other manhood, which we study, when we open the Old Testament and see how “at sundry times and in divers measures, God spake unto our fathers,” as recorded there.

One of the first and most puzzling of the facts which strike us when we study the Dispensation of the Law, is the difficulty of deciding whether we shall call Israel a State or a Church. It was the one

or the other according to the point of view from which we may be at the moment regarding it. That is, it was both in one. The two threads, the political and the spiritual, were so closely interwoven, that it is simply a question of how the light falls on it, whether it shall be treated as sacred or secular; whether the complex texture shall be looked upon as wholly State or wholly Church.

I have spoken of the essential form of the Christian commonwealth in Judaism. I do not mean by this that the Jewish is a type, as it is called, of the Christian Church; that is, something which, like the rudimental organs in the lower animals, had but an imperfect meaning in its times and for its times, being set up chiefly as an image of something which should afterwards be brought forth. I confess that I am fairly weary of the word type in this sense, and of the kind of talk in which typical theologians indulge. I do not in the least believe in the view of the Divine dispensations which underlies this typical theory; nor do I believe that God sacrifices one age to another,—heathenism to Judaism, or Judaism to Christianity,—after the fashion which these typical theories suppose. All things which bear the mark of the Divine hand are good in their times. They are in all cases the very best forms of organization of which the condition of things admits. They have the same basis and the same purpose as the more advanced forms which the progressing culture of mankind allows in time to appear. God is one; His principle of action is one; His method is one, His end is one, in every age of the world.

The Bible, too, is one, from Genesis to the Apocalypse. The idea which runs through it is Christian to the heart's core. The idea of man's relation to God, and God's relation to man, as the Redeemer, knows no variation, from the hour when the Lord first stooped to lift the burden of man's misery and woe in Eden, to the culmination of the redemptive work, which the Apocalypse dimly foreshadows in the transcendent words, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. xxi. 1—4.) And the idea is the Christian idea throughout. Christ was as much the Author and the Head of the Jewish dispensation as of the Christian. God incarnate rules and leads the host, organizes and heads the Church. This is Pauline doctrine. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians it is most explicitly and powerfully set forth: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses

in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ. . . . Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." (1 Cor. x. 1—4, 9.)

There is no mere type set before us here. The angel with the Church in the wilderness was Christ. The Captain of the Lord's host was Christ. The rock which followed them, and supplied their thirsty need, was Christ. Can words be more explicit and absolute than these? Do not let us waste them or fritter their meaning away. God has one idea of human relations, of man's relation to man, and man's relation to Himself. The conditions of human organization as laid down by Him have never wavered. Man can only dwell peacefully and blessedly, with man and with God, on the basis and under the conditions which the Ruler of men has laid down, alike under the patriarchal, the legal, and the Gospel dispensations. Miracles are simply illustrations—shinings out in front of the veil of the powers and the methods which are ever at work behind it. The Jewish state was the illustrated, the illuminated model of the Christian state, which in the order of development was to succeed it. Judaism grew into Christianity as naturally, as necessarily, as the bud grows into the flower. It was distinctly a supernatural development; but the method has its illustration in the natural growths of the physical world.

“The Word which was in the beginning, which was with God, which was God, . . . was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John i. 1, 14.) And this created Christendom. But it was the same Lord from the same heaven who had made Judaism, and it was made after the same fashion. It is the same Lord who is making the bud into the flower every spring time before our eyes. The Jewish *grew* into the Christian Church. The idea which was hidden in it wrought itself out into clearer form and fuller expression in Christianity. The idea which is yet hidden in the Church, though as compared with the Judaic stage it has found a full manifestation, has to work itself out into a larger and more glorious form of development. “Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” (Col. iii. 3, 4.) “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” (Rom. viii. 18—21.)

We are not at liberty to think that anything essential, anything which God had inspired, perished

when the mere shell of Judaism was shattered; and that a new Christian structure was built up *on* the foundations, and *from* the foundations, amid the wreck. The best Jew, by Jewish standards, living in his times, was St. Paul. He and those who wrought with him were Hebrews of the Hebrews. Paul accepted that further teaching which unfolded to him the mystery which had been hidden from ages and generations, as a Jew, and after the Jewish fashion. Just as Moses received the revelation (compare Exodus iii. iv. with Acts ix.), Paul received it in his day. With sore difficulty and pain, as Moses had received his commission, Paul opened his heart to the call of the Lord. Like Moses, hard as he struggled against the call in the first instance, "he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." What he received from Christ, that, like Moses, he promulgated to the world.

The man who was the typical Jew of his day was obedient to the heavenly voice. It was this spirit which had distinguished his fathers, which had separated them from the world around them, and constituted them a living and growing Church. By the word of the Lord through the lips of their prophets they gained each successive step in their development. It was God's word, coming to the purest and noblest of their race, in clearer and yet clearer tones, which prepared them, not to abandon Judaism and adopt Christianity, but to develop Judaism into Christianity, and to reveal on a larger platform, and with a world as its theatre, that idea of the Christian commonwealth, which

Judaism had presented in its essential outlines to mankind.

And one of the most marked features of Judaism was the identity of State and Church. It is often remarked as something singular, and apart from Christian experiences, that there is no clear line to be drawn between things secular and sacred in the literature, the history, and the daily life of the Jewish people. This is explained, as though it were quite an exceptional thing, by the theocracy. It was a theocracy, we are told, and therefore this peculiar phenomenon appears. And thus theocracy is looked upon as the exceptional form of God's intervention in ordering and ruling His world. If theocracy means anything, it must be under a theocracy that we are living—or rather a Christocracy; for “no man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.” I have already shown how it was the Lord Christ, the being who was manifest in the flesh in the man Christ Jesus, who ruled the Jewish Church and was the inspiration of its life. From the moment when the first promise was made to the crushed and outcast sinner in Eden, the Lord Christ has been the ruler and Saviour of the world.

We have very vague and to a considerable extent very false ideas of the Jewish theocracy. We think of it as the realm of what we call, most justly, the personal reign of God. But it is needful to understand the light which the Scripture throws on this personal reign. God gave the law to the people amid the thunderings and lightnings of

Sinai. The essential thing was the belief of the people that the law had come to them directly, and by revelation, from the spiritual world. From time to time Jehovah repeated the revelation, and made them understand the sanctions by which His truth was hallowed, and the force which supported His priests and kings. But things went on in the Jewish state very much as they go on in Christian states. Their kings ruled as other kings rule, and succeeded each other after the common law on the throne.

God spake to His people by prophets, no doubt, and this was a distinguishing feature of the national life. But what was a prophet? The writings of a few great ones, men of transcendent genius and power, have come down to us. But these men of supreme genius were then, as now, most rare. The Jews had a multitude of prophets of whom we know nothing, and whose very names have perished. How were they to know them? It must have oftentimes been grievously perplexing to determine whether a true divinely-inspired prophet was speaking to them or not. The prophet in the main was a man whose truth was to speak for him, and was to make its way, much as in these days the preacher's word has to make its way, to the human conscience and heart. The people were to listen to the prophet, simply because he spake to them the words of God. But the responsibility of deciding who was thus inspired, and who was not, mainly lay with the people. The burden of accepting the teacher or of repelling him was on their consciences, and we may be sure that it was not always simple

and easy work. Elijah, Isaiah, and men of that calibre, could be discerned at once. But there must have been many concerning whom the fact was by no means so clear. The duty of the people was to discern the prophet, and to honour and love him for his truth's sake. But God did not as a rule clothe him with terror, and frighten them into submission, whether their hearts were submissive or no. Nothing of the kind. Nor indeed was miracle allowed to be the crucial test of the mission of a prophet, as the following remarkable passage from the Law will show: "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice, and ye shall serve Him, and cleave unto Him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God." (Deut. xiii. 1—4.) The theocracy, then, was the rule of the living God over the minds and hearts of the people, by means of the truth which He sent men to declare to them, and the Spirit by whom He strove within their hearts.

Precisely in the same way He has given us a law in Christ, which we know comes to us from the spiritual sphere. The miracles of Judaism are our miracles, the prophets of Judaism are our prophets; He is seeking to reign over us, too, by the truth which He sends His servants to proclaim, and the Spirit by whom He is ever striving in our hearts. We talk of a personal reign as though a visible Divine person would come to set up a visible earthly throne; and that, we think, will be the theocracy restored. But there was nothing in any way like that under Judaism; there can be nothing like it under Christianity. The Jewish theocracy was after quite another and more Christian fashion. This idea of the personal reign is the shield which we raise between our souls and that thing which we chiefly dread, the searching, purging sway of the Word and the Spirit of the Lord over our individual hearts. The theocracy must be in *us* before it is in the world; and this we shrink from: "Let us alone, Jesus, Thou Son of God. Why art Thou come to torment us before our time?" We live under the personal reign of Christ as distinctly, as absolutely, as the Jews did; and Christendom has to work out on a larger theatre and to a higher power that idea of a Christian State, which in the State that God Himself founded and ruled was sketched in its broad outlines to the world.

The dominant fact in Judaism from our present point of view is that there was, strictly speaking, no Jewish Church—except in so far as the State was the Church. The Levitical tribe and the order of

priests will at once occur as contradicting the assertion which I have just made. A closer examination of the matter, will, I believe, strongly confirm it. The order of priests, and indeed the whole sacred tribe, was selected and set apart as the representatives of the whole community. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, And I, behold I, have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn; Because all the firstborn are mine, for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast; mine shall they be; I am the Lord. . . (Numb. iii. 11—13, 44, 45.)

It is remarkable that no sort of ruling power, or superior power of any kind, was entrusted to them, or recognized as dwelling in them, in relation to spiritual things. There was no sort of clerical order in Judaism, gifted with a special knowledge and a special power of teaching and rule in the spiritual sphere of the national life. There was nothing, in fact, which we can speak of as a Church under the Law, as distinguished from what might be called a world, except as moral character and conduct and personal fellowship with God might put a distinction between man and man. There was no secular province and no spiritual province.* There was no department of the national activity which it belonged specially to the king to oversee, while another be-

* I am not unmindful of the sacrificial system in making this statement. But a discussion of its real character, and its relation to the vital activity of the nation, would lead me too far.

longed as specially to the priest. A king, and not a council of priests, or a convocation, composed and edited the liturgy of the Jewish Church. If men were needed for the spiritual instruction of the people, it was by no means constantly—indeed, we may say it was very rarely—that they were sought from the order of the priests. It was entirely the Independent principle, personal fitness for and call to the work. The man who was moved to write a psalm or to utter a prophecy, wrote and uttered it. Whether king, priest, shepherd, workman, prince, or soldier, it mattered not. Power to do it was the one thing which justified the doing. The man, whoever he might be, to whatever class he might belong, was a member of the sacred nation, and he had a Divine right to speak to it, if God had put it into his heart to speak to it, in the name of the Lord. By the same law the people were under a sacred obligation to hear. And thus the State, which was the Church, was ruled by the Lord, speaking and working through all the organs of the national life.

In our Lord's time the rulers of the State and the rulers of the Church were one. Both were fearfully corrupt, but they clung faithfully to the fundamental idea that there was no essential distinction, in a State which was ruled by God, between the political and the spiritual sphere. Politics became sacred when it was a called, a holy nation, which had to be trained and ruled. There was no sort of room there for distinctions between secular and sacred in literature, in politics, in life. We often say of the Jews

that all their literature was sacred. That means that they were so penetrated by spiritual ideas and convictions, that they saturated all their utterance and action. Just thus would it be with us did we understand our calling as a Christian nation, and care to make our calling and election sure. You find in Judaism an entire absence of anything like two high contracting powers, one calling itself State, the other calling itself Church. Alliance of Church and State there, was blankly impossible; for there was no Church other than the State, no State other than the Church, to be allied. David's reign, his conduct on the throne, was the most visibly sacred thing in Israel; that is, the thing with which God had most directly to do; and by him, not by priest, not even by prophet, He formed the liturgy of the Jewish Church, in which the whole community uttered to God its fears, its moans, its hopes, and its joys.

And this is, I believe, the essential idea of a Christian commonwealth. What God did for the Jews by walking amongst them as a people, Christ does for Christendom by walking among us. He makes our whole life, in all its interests and activities, a sacred thing. There is nothing, if we understand our calling, purely earthly or secular in the life of a Christian people, since the Lord became human; since the God-man came to live in, to talk with, and to walk with the human world. To establish and maintain something which may be called a Church in a Christian State, it seems to me, is formally to unchristianize it. It is to try to undo all that for

four thousand years God has been attempting to establish in our world.

This may seem a strong statement; I will endeavour to explain it. The majority of Christian people in England probably believe that the only way to define a Christian State, to make it visibly Christian, is to establish Christianity, to give it a legal recognition, standing, and power. To me it appears, on the contrary, after the best thought which I can give to it, that the legal establishment and support of Christianity is the confession that the nation is not Christian; and that it needs to have an institution created and maintained by Christian rulers in its midst, to convert it to the Christian life. Now this may correspond to the actual state of things in this country,—in all countries that call themselves Christian. But it destroys the idea of the Christian commonwealth—that is, a nation like the Jewish, expressing freely in all its acts and utterances the impulses of the religious life.

The religious life in a man and in a community, just in the measure in which it is a life, is a spirit, tinging every act and utterance, and mingling itself with the whole conversation of the man or the society. To subject it to a formal external law, to ordain for it fixed and authorized expressions, and thereby necessarily to forbid or discountenance all other, would, in the case of personal or domestic religion, rob it of all vitality; that is, it would rob it of that which makes it the salt and the light of the daily round of secular work. It is no otherwise with the

community. The establishment of religion on a legal basis, the appointment of authorized teachers and teachings, the maintenance of an apparatus of influence which must be to a large extent mechanical, and must have the effect of discountenancing all free movements beyond its sphere, so far from constituting a nation Christian, must inevitably, where the spiritual element is strong, limit the action and lower the tone of the national religious life.

But this raises another question. Are we not describing and arguing upon an altogether ideal state of society? Where is the nation which is so thoroughly saturated with the spirit of Christ, as to manifest its Christian character in all its acts and utterances; whose Christian life is so exuberant, that it would suffer by the limitations and depressions which a legal establishment inevitably generates? I can fancy that intelligent advocates of establishments might, if they were to discern such a nation, be disposed to confess that it might supply its spiritual needs and carry on its spiritual development in a much more excellent way. But this contrast between the ideal and the actual is the sad element in the question; and it is this, they say, which makes an alliance between the Church and the State needful to maintain a due measure of Christian influence on the community.

Now there can be no doubt that the effort to work out the idea of the oneness of the Church and the State into a clear form has been the great struggle of the inner life of every state in Christendom; and out of the apparent difference between the two, the

divergence of their boundary lines,* the deepest sorrows of Christian society spring. It is but the sorrow of the individual Christian life magnified to the national scale. The same sad contrast between the ideal and the actual affronts us everywhere. We are individually constantly perplexed by the question, whether there is any true Christian life in us, whether in any high sense we are members of the living body of the Saviour, stones in the living temple, we discover so few of the lineaments of the Christlike character in our nature, and the lines which we do discover are so dim. And is this world in which we do our business day by day, in which men are struggling with mad selfishness for the mastery, and seizing every advantage over each other which a savage might seize, a Christian society? How are we to deal with it? How far are we to adopt the Christian laws in carrying on our business transactions with it? And this great world of Christendom, where is its Christianity? Those two grand historic Christian nations, which are at this moment bringing every ounce of their strength and every flash of their energy to bear on the work of pounding each other, by tens, by hundreds of thousands, into bloody clay, trampling each other's harvests, burning each other's villages, shooting each other's captains, and burying each other's civilisation under the ashes and wreck of shattered cities,—do these peoples honour Him, whose parting word to all that should believe on His name was this, “A

* Nowhere does the contrast appear more striking than in the language of Coleridge or Arnold about the Church.

new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another" ?

And the answer would be, Yes. Yes! we are Christian men and women; our households are Christian households; our public life is the life of a Christian society; these great nations are Christian nations, in spite of all the sad features which are so dreadfully out of harmony with Christ and with His Gospel. There lies deep down in us, in our homes, in our business, in our international life, in spite of our lies, our jealousies, and our wars, some vital element, something which is working powerfully on the vital springs, of which neither the world nor the devil, but Christ, is the parent, and to whose growing influence He looks to strengthen His hold on us and on human society. Nothing that we find in ourselves, nothing that we see in the world, deeply as it may sadden us, can release us from the obligation to work at the problem as one that is capable of a Christian solution, and to bring Christian principles to bear, with the whole force of which we are masters, on our own lives and on the life of our fellow-men.

Now it is in the endeavour to work out this problem, to make that which is ideally, so to speak, a Christian nation, really Christian, that the idea of an alliance between the Church and the State presents itself—the State choosing some form of Christian belief, and lending its wealth and its force to press it on the acceptance of the whole community. I hold this alliance of the State with the Church to be an essentially unchristian thing; it

departs utterly from the method by which God in the old world, and in the formative ages of the new, wrought at the work of the religious culture of humanity ; while it seems simply blind to that which is most vital, and therefore most essential, in Christianity. But this idea of an alliance between Church and State, as between two high contracting powers, is, I should be prepared to maintain, an exceedingly low and indeed false conception of the true character of the National Establishment, and is quite unsupported by its early history. Nothing like an alliance between two separate bodies, a Church governed by priests and a State governed by kings, was transacted at the Reformation. What took place then might much more fitly be described as a nation reforming its religious estate.* The idea of two separate bodies in alliance, each having its own rulers and laws, is the product of a later age. Modern State-Church ideas, we may say, with all the moral impoverishment which they bring in their train, have been largely moulded by the controversies which were generated by that miserable movement two hundred years ago, whereby the Church of England expelled the Nonconformists, and purged itself of its purest and strongest Christian life. Modern State-Church controversies are the bitter fruit of that shameful wrong, as is the poverty of spirit which has fallen on the Church and on Churchmen from that day till now, when a revival is stirring, and things are beginning to live anew. Its Nemesis is that nobler

* This point will be discussed more at length in a subsequent chapter.

idea of the Christian commonwealth which the Independents, in witnessing against the principle of Establishment, have nurtured, and which seems likely, and soon, to take out of the hands of State-ruled Churches the work of realizing the Christian national life.

There is something then radically false in the conception of a National Church as an organized body distinct from, and capable of being allied with or divorced from, the State. Nothing of the kind has ever existed in Christendom; nothing of the kind ever will exist. The disestablished Irish Church affords a remarkable proof of this. When the Government of the country saw that the time for disestablishing and disendowing the Irish branch of the National Church had come, instead of finding in the Irish Protestant Church a body ready made, it had to create a Church-body with which it could treat, and to which it could make over the government of the enfranchised Church. While it was included in the National Establishment, it was not an independent body in alliance with the State—a body which would retain its form when the alliance might be severed. It was in a sense part of the State. The political and social life of the community formed an important element in its life, and when its miserable disproportion to its pretension and its purpose compelled its abolition, something had to be called into existence to give it anything like a substantial basis as an independent Christian Church. But that being created, it having an individual form and life, it ceased to be in any sense

national. It is now but one of the many Church organizations in Ireland which are doing their utmost to instruct and to help the community.

Rome never made the mistake which we are constantly making in England, about the nature and signs of a Christian commonwealth. She holds that the Church is exactly coincident and conterminous with the State in every country in Christendom which obeys her rule. She has in the background the further idea, which she once made prominent, that the Pope is the supreme ruler of both, with kings and magistrates as subordinate officers, to take charge of matters which may by comparison be looked upon as belonging to the lower, secular sphere. So far, Rome has been faithful to that idea of unity, the oneness of State and Church, which is essentially Christian; though, as ever, she has striven to work out the idea in a gross worldly form, under the sceptre of an earthly and often foolish and shortsighted regent of Christ; instead of under Christ Himself, ruling men's hearts and consciences from the spiritual sphere.

But the difficulty of realizing this Christian idea in any Christian State is well-nigh desperate. Just as the apostolic Church had to convert a pagan world to Christ, and was necessarily separate from it, with its own boundaries, officers, and laws; so in any Christian State up to this present there are multitudes who need to be converted to Christ, and who only by what may seem to be a lax use of words can be comprehended within the limits of a Church at all. The Gospel has still a missionary

function in every State in Christendom; men have not only to be helped to live by it, they have to be persuaded to believe in it. Those who love it and live by it, form a community within the wider community; and this narrower body is tempted to call itself *THE CHURCH*, in contrast to the unbelieving world around.

But what does a National Church mean under such conditions? The Church from one point of view, regarded as having an independent organization and power of action, is a missionary institution in the nation, acting on the nation of its own free will, having members, orders, and officers of its own, with which the nation as a nation has nothing whatever to do. It can expel it, if it likes; it can silence it; but it has no pretence or capacity to rule it, or to intervene in the regulation of its affairs. If Anglican Churchmen regard their Church as a missionary institution, a community of believers in the midst of an evil world, having a law of their own, ministers and ordinances of their own, under the headship of an unseen king, then I can thoroughly sympathize with their desire to be free from all State patronage and control, that they may manage their own affairs in their own way. But then they must give up the word national, and renounce all the pretension which it involves. They are simply a voluntary community, having certain beliefs about Christianity, which they seek to impress upon their fellow-citizens. But they cannot constitute a National Church. The idea of a National Church, whose rulers are clergy, which shall have

the whole spiritual interests of the community in charge, having its own ordinances, officers, and laws, of which it is the only lawful custodian and administrator,—lending a Christian character to the State by its alliance, and deriving material countenance and support from the State in return,—is simply anti-Christian. The genius of Christianity knows nothing of it, and the history of Judaism, which is supposed to be its stronghold, disowns it utterly.

The only National Church, in that broad sense, is the whole community which has been redeemed by Christ, and on which and in which He is working as the Head of the Church in a thousand ways of which theologians of all parties little dream. There is a very deep and solemn sense in which a Christian people, whose laws are based on the Divine law,* and whose civilisation has been fed from Christian springs, is a Church-State,—a State whose public assemblies are competent to deal with spiritual matters, availing themselves of the help of those who are wisest among them in spiritual things, just as they seek the help of those who are most instructed on the subject, when they legislate on medicine or on law. But when men talk of a Church of England coextensive with the State, but claiming

* The extent to which the ideas and principles of Christianity have affected the legislation of the European nations is little appreciated by those who have not specially studied it. To take an easy and ready instance, King Alfred's laws, out of which our laws have partly grown, commence by the recital of important passages from the Old and New Testaments. But the original influence lies far behind this, and is a deeper thing than quotations from the Bible can explain.

independent power to rule itself and to regulate its affairs by the hand of its bishops and priests, they are simply developing an anti-Christian idea.

Nothing is more foreign to the genius of Christianity, and of the Divine dispensations in all ages of the world, than the notion that any class or order in the great human commonwealth has in virtue of its privileged position, its education and traditions, a right and a power in relation to spiritual truth which cannot be shared by the great mass of the people. The curse of Christendom has been the endeavour to make the Church a corporation to which men were to be admitted, and in which alone the right and the power to deal with spiritual subjects dwells. The Spirit of the Lord is a free spirit, quickening and illuminating whom He will; that is, those whom He finds "willing in the day of His power." The power of dealing with spiritual things is entirely dependent on this illumination, which visits equally priest and layman; nay, as all Church history assures us, is more likely to be found with the layman than with the priest. Professional habits and interests generate most swiftly complete blindness to all the realities of the spiritual world. This faculty must be recognized and honoured to teach and to rule according to the measure of the illumination, if there is to be anything like a Divine order either in State or Church. There is but one principle of this order in both State and Church, the two in every Christian land being ultimately one, and that is, recognition of and obedience to those who are called to teach and

to rule, by being endowed with the faculty to teach and to rule by the Lord.

The High Church view, as we might call it, of the National Church seems fatal to its claim to be national, in any high sense of the word. But does the same objection lie against the Broad Church view, the view of the advocates of a wide comprehension, who hold that, as one of the ablest of them lays it down, "The State should recognize and support some religious expression of the community, which religious expression should be controlled and guided by the State;" while at the same time they would have the State interfere as little as possible, maintain wide limits of doctrine, and allow free thought and free speech as far as it decently can? The question is a grave one. Is not such a method more likely to realize the idea of a Christian commonwealth, which we all believe in, which we all aim at, than anything which we Independents can offer in its stead? My own conviction, after reading a good deal about it, and considering much at any rate which is urged by the "comprehensive" advocates of a National Church, is that the method, were it fully carried out, which I hold to be impossible, would destroy instead of edifying the Christian commonwealth, and stifle instead of stimulating the revival of our religious life. The realization of our dreams and hopes lies at the end of the opposite, the Independent, way.

I have spoken of the public assemblies of a Christian State as competent to deal with spiritual

^ matters.* My complaint of the legal establishment of religion, is not that the representative council of a Christian nation has no right to occupy itself with Christianity. I think that the members of such an assembly have a perfect right to occupy themselves with it, if it is the wise thing for them to do. If they could undertake its regulation without inevitably marring more than they make, and destroying more than they build, let them do it by all means. With me it is simply a question of the wise and the possible. I entirely hold with the Dean of Westminster in the principles which he lays down as to things secular and spiritual, and as to secular and spiritual assemblies, in the able and most liberal paper which he read at Sion College in 1868. Were I to choose between the regulation of my religious belief and life by the British Parliament, or their regulation by any spiritual synod that I am acquainted with, I would pray that I might fall into the hands of the seculars rather than the saints. But I believe in the rule of neither. I believe that Convocation, the Wesleyan Conference, the Congregational Union, or the General Assembly, would make just the same confusion as I hold that the British Parliament has made, did they undertake to formulate the creeds, maintain the ministers, and guide the action of a National Church.

A body like the British Parliament may abstain from all attempt at legislation on certain subjects, not because they are indifferent to them or afraid of

* It is but right that I should confess that many Nonconformist authorities would probably differ with me on this point very widely.

them, but because they reverence them too deeply to submit them to their manipulations; because they know that they would only mar them if they were to touch them with their legal fingers. Of this class are the domestic sympathies and affections, and the free play of the higher intellectual life of the community. It is not that these things are palpably beyond the sphere of a Government. In the republic of which Plato dreamed, all these things would have been under rigid governmental control. Nor is it a mere dream. The Red Republicans in Europe at this moment are sternly and madly bent on establishing a democratic government, whose regulating hand nothing shall escape. But our Government refrains from these things because they are too free, too spiritual, to be grasped by its hand of law. They belong to a sphere in which such wisdom and power as reside in governments have but feeble function, in which the writs of assemblies will not run. They need regulation badly enough; how much of the vital welfare of the community depends on their being regulated; but yet a wise Government will not attempt their regulation, but will leave them to the higher influences through which plays more directly the breath of God.

On precisely this ground I would have a Government refrain from what must be coarse and futile efforts to regulate and develop the religious life of the people. It belongs to a region, not beyond their competency, but beyond their power. One shudders to think of the costly, wasteful, pompous, grasping, titled, beneficed, wealthy, and bigoted

thing which has been presented during three hundred years to the English people as the visible embodiment of His kingdom, who was the Incarnation of tenderness, compassion, purity, patience, gentleness, and love, who came to this earth, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life as a ransom for many."* And yet we wonder at the alienation of the great mass of our fellow-countrymen from the Gospel, forgetting strangely the picture which we have given them of the kingdom of heaven.

Nor is it an evil which any mere reforms can cure. The whole principle is vicious to the very roots. It is possible to maintain an orderly, learned, polished, dignified succession of ministrations in a National Establishment; to secure the due administration of ordinances, and the pastoral oversight in a formal way of the great mass of the community. But there is one thing which the Establishment principle cannot secure, and which on the whole, in the sum of its influence, it seems rather to stifle—that glowing, burning zeal, that vivid exuberant life which the free Spirit quickens wherever there is freedom, and which is the one thing to which you must look for the work which Parliaments will abandon in despair, the conversion, the moral quickening and elevation of the great body of the people. This can come

* I earnestly hope that I may not be regarded as describing by these words what seem to me to be the predominating features of the Established Church. But I would very seriously press on Churchmen the question, whether this is not the aspect which it must present to those who look at it only from the outside, and who cannot see, as some of us can see, the workings of its interior life.

alone, as it came in old time, as it comes in all great times of revival and upheaval, from the free play of the spiritual life of the community. Is it equal to the task? God help us, if it is not; for plainly nothing else is. But it is faithless to doubt it. Thanks to the Establishment, we know nothing yet of what may be possible to freedom—the free outburst of the latent spiritual force of the people, under His inspiration and guidance who has left a promise, which Churches are apt to appropriate, but which a Christian nation may most fully share, “Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”

To sum up my argument. The Establishment principle, even under the most favourable conditions, seems to run directly counter to the fundamental principle of the spiritual government of men, as we watch it working through all the ages—and that is the free play of the Divine Spirit as the teacher and ruler of men in individual consciences and hearts. We find this freedom to be the condition of healthy action and development in the higher domestic, social, and intellectual life of the community. Quite clearly, it is the only thing which can help us in a yet higher sphere. And in these days of searching trial of principles, these days of revival, in which the living Spirit of God is visibly stirring the stagnant waters, that a new and beautiful world may fashion itself under His breath, it seems clear that the Establishment principle, which belongs to the age of stagnancy and deadness, and is rooted in the old and decaying order, is doomed, and must die.

Further, the attempt to realize the great Christian idea, the oneness of the Christian commonwealth, by *making* a Church, constituting it national, decreeing that its boundaries shall be conterminous with those of the political community, and governing it through the political rulers, is a miserable parody of the reality; mocking the promise of Scripture and the hope of man in one way, as sadly as the Church of Rome feeds us with illusions in another.

Finally, the Independent method is that which alone offers the promise of a true success. Leave the spiritual life which is in the nation free to express and to organize itself as the Spirit moves it; and trust Him who has the destinies of Christendom in charge so to move in and to work by the free and voluntary agencies which after an ancient apostolic fashion, never mated since, He can create and sustain, as to purify society in its springs, and to Christianize the whole action of the State. The method is long and difficult,—all true reformatations are long and difficult in such a world as this; but there is absolutely no other way to the end. We must work in faith, sow our seed weeping, and wait patiently, because trustfully, for the harvest. Our Churches can make no pretence to be national; but just in so far as they can touch the conscience and purify the heart of the community, they will be making the nation a Church after the pattern set forth in the word of God. The one great need of our times is the multiplication of these independent radiating centres of spiritual influence, and the purification of their life and light. May God multiply

the free Churches of England a thousand-fold, and baptize them with His Spirit; and then it will be seen, when this great worldly Established structure which has been built up among us falls, as fall it must, that nothing Christian has perished, but that the Lord our God is with us, and the shout of a king is amongst us still.

Against the generous advocates of a wide comprehension, we maintain our Independency, and will maintain it. We cannot consent to sell our birth-right for the mess of pottage which an Established position would offer to us; nor can we lend our influence to the maintenance of a system which, with all the noble service which it has rendered to England, has yet been the chief obstacle to the reception of the Gospel by the great mass of our people, and, reform it as we may, must remain the chief obstacle so long as it endures.

The Revolution of the Last Quarter
of a Century.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE four chapters which follow were originally delivered in the form of Lectures, under circumstances of peculiar interest to the author and to his congregation. After twenty-four years' ministry at Claylands Chapel, he had just removed to a larger church, as it is now the fashion to call it, which his congregation has built at Brixton. Part of them go with him to the new work, while some remain to carry on the old work in the old place. It occurred to him that a review of that most eventful quarter of a century, during which he has been the minister of Claylands Chapel, might be interesting to the congregation which was thus about to "become two bands." Hence the Lectures which are the basis of the following chapters, in which something of the form of a spoken address has been advisedly retained. The subject, as the reader will see, is a large one, and the limits are narrow. The author offers no more than suggestions of thought on the great crisis through which we have been living. Political events he has not attempted to include in his plan. He hopes that the general reader, whose interest in the book will depend on the measure of truth which it contains, will pardon the personal allusions and details in the first page or two, for the sake of the special circumstances of interest to the author and to his congregation, of which they will be in some sort the permanent record.

I.

THE INTELLECTUAL REVOLUTION.

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IN reviewing this most eventful quarter of a century, during which I have been the minister of Claylands Chapel, I am reminded, as many others will be reminded, but not, I hope, altogether sadly, how much of the best, or at least of the most vigorous, period of life is gone! The season of spring and elastic vigour, when the sensation of life is joyous, when both soul and body can sing at their tasks, is over! But there should be no sadness in the thought; death, if we are found faithful unto death, will restore the spring and renew the joy of youth for ever. I look back over nearly the lifetime of a generation, during which I have preached the Gospel here with an interest which has known no intermission, and a joy which has never failed. I am about to leave the scene of a long and happy ministry, and to begin a new work, to a large extent among strangers. Many dear personal friends, my fellow-labourers for years, I shall carry with me; and many, too, with whom my association has been less close and familiar, but to whom, by God's

blessing, my ministry has been helpful; but still it is in a large measure a new work which is awaiting me, and I feel very solemnly that it is and must be a difficult and perilous work in such a critical and searching age as this. My mind, you may well believe, is full of very serious and anxious thought, and I shall be readily pardoned a few earnest personal words.

I recall my first visit to Claylands Chapel, my first entrance on what has been the main work of my life. I recall the high hope, the joyous energy, with which I started on my young career. Now, with strength somewhat strained, with hope somewhat sobered, with heart somewhat saddened, I look around me, and try to estimate results. What is the secret of that natural sadness which seems, as life advances, to steal over all who have had a genuine interest in the welfare of their fellows, and who have tried to live, however imperfectly they may have realized their aspirations, for the service of mankind? The great masters of this art of ministry, the chief servants of their generations according to the will of God, seem to have known this sadness most profoundly. Moses, Elijah, Paul, Augustine, Gregory, Bernard, Cromwell, did not grow more joyous as they grew older. Paul's saddest words about this world are his last words. They would strike us more strongly but for the triumphant tones of faith and hope with which they are lightened. The last treatise which Bernard wrote is full of sadness. He had a dark vision of the present, and prevision of the future, of the Church which he had loved and

served so well. And the humblest servants in the same school, whether ministers or laymen, know something of the experience. A certain sadness steals over them as they review their work and estimate its issues. Let us pause just for a moment to search for its spring.

I think that it has two chief sources. In the first place, there is the sense of the miserable poverty of their life work and its achievements, compared with the claim which Christ has on them, and the great ends which they have kept in sight; and then they are oppressed by the vision of the unvarying level of the folly, the sin, the vice, the wretchedness of the world. Rarely has this sense found such noble and intense expression as in the words which Mr. Browning puts into the mouth of his Broad Church Pope:—

“And is this little all that was to be?
Where is the gloriously-decisive change,
The immeasurable metamorphosis
Of human clay to divine gold, we looked
Should, in some poor sort, justify the price?
Had a mere adept of the Rosy Cross
Spent his life to consummate the Great Work,
Would we not start to see the stuff it touched
Yield not a grain more than the vulgar got
By the old smelting process years ago?
If this were sad to see in just the sage
Who should profess so much, perform no more,
What is it when suspected in that Power
Who undertook to make and made the world,
Devised and did effect man, body and soul,
Ordained salvation for them both, and yet——
Well, is the thing we see salvation?”

The Ring and the Book, vol. iv., p. 70.

Since I commenced my ministry here, England has lived through what coming generations will characterize as a Revolution. In a measure of which many of us little dream, "old things have passed away, and all things have become new." All things, it would seem, but one thing. We have new means of locomotion, new methods of business, and new channels of intercourse. We have new populations thronging round us, new relations of classes, and new notions of political rights and duties. Government is inspired by a new spirit; trade has developed itself on a new basis, and with new and tremendous energy; literature clothes new thoughts in new forms; science has founded a new empire; the world is full of a new wonder; society is instinct with new ideas and thrilling with a new vitality; but one thing seems to remain constant through it all, full always to the brim,—the sin, the sorrow, the wretchedness of mankind.

Look round at this neighbourhood. It is a fair sample of a crowded London district. We have been strenuously at work here for more than a quarter of a century. The thousands which we have spent here afford a very poor measure of the effort, the toil, the tears, the prayers with which we have striven to work for its good. We have accomplished much from one point of view. Many and many a hungry one we have fed, an ignorant one we have taught, a naked one we have clothed, a vicious one we have reformed, an apostate we have reclaimed. And many a one, whom we shall never know or hear of in this world, now in a position of

trust and honour, is blessing us daily for our ministry, or in the heavenly mansions reviews our work with grateful joy. All this we see, and give thanks ; but we look round us, and our hearts are saddened once more.

Alas ! the ignorance seems denser, the penury more dire, the vice more rampant, the misery more utter, than when we commenced our work a quarter of a century ago. We cleanse a little spot ; we lift a household or a nest of households for a while on to a purer and higher level of life. But how soon does the foul flood swell up again, and overflow our work. It is a sad, sad subject, this constant level of vice and misery—the way in which sin on a great scale mocks our efforts, while poverty grows upon us, and the problems of Christian ministry become more difficult of mastery year by year. It is this which oppresses the hearts most earnestly bent on their solution, as their experience widens. It is this which, but that by God's help we can lift ourselves sometimes to share the vision and the hope of Christ, would quench our energies in sad and stern despair. "But why art thou cast down, O my soul ; and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope thou in God." We may not let the sadness master us. We are bound to believe that the eye of Christ sees a progress which is hidden from our sight, and that age by age, generation by generation, yea even year by year, He sees growing the fruit of His travail, and tastes in ever widening measure that "satisfaction" for the pain and the toil of Calvary which will one day be complete.

And we may gather some hope about this our ministry from the signs of the times around us. If poverty, ignorance, and vice are growing upon us, there is another and yet mightier thing growing—the resolution to bring the best intelligence, as well as the best energy of society, to bear upon it. Charity for years past has wanted, not hands chiefly, but brains. The hands are ready, more numerous than ever; thank God, the brain power is now being supplied. Society is now taking up the problem with intense earnestness. Is it too much to hope that the flood-mark has been reached, and that the waters begin to fall?

I have described the generation through which we are living as an era of Revolution. Coming generations will perhaps see that the Victorian era, under all its splendid prosperity and progress, has been one of the most marked revolutionary eras in the history of modern society. But it is needful that I should clearly define what I mean by the Revolution, as on the truth of the position thus assumed very much of my argument in these chapters will depend.

There is a sense in which every generation passes through a revolution. Old things pass away, many things become new, as each fresh phalanx of the human army passes forth into the world. And they are ever passing forth; each year a new line deploys. The young spirit is revolutionary like young wine; it ferments, and strains the skins of the past to bursting. It rebels instinctively against the old forms and habits, and has a passion for making all

things new. Society is always casting its skin. It moults, with more or less of sickness and sadness, and it comes forth in due time with fresh vigour and in a braver dress. There is no interval of thirty years to be found in human history, in which there has not been a great upheaval and propulsion of society ; in which the horizon has not been widened ; in which the march of the human host has not been accelerated ; in which the drums have not sounded to the assault of some fresh citadel of darkness ; in which the standards have not been borne on deeper into the realm of ignorance and night.

But in describing this generation in which we are living as an era of revolution, I am not thinking of the expansive and progressive movement which follows the advent of each young generation—that enlargement of vision, knowledge, and life which attends “the process of the suns.” It seems rather as though in these days society were transferring itself to a new basis ; were laying deep down new fundamental principles of order, instead of expanding on the old bases, and moving onward in the old tracks. Is not the order which has held society together in Europe for ages visibly breaking up and vanishing ; while new ideas of human relationship, new principles of political and social constitution, are slowly and painfully organizing themselves in its stead ? Perhaps we may say that the ideas which the great French Revolution announced have at length, and only at length, fairly established themselves in the leading political communities of Europe and America. And I believe

that it was not possible that they should fully and fruitfully establish themselves, until we Englishmen had given to the world the steam-engine, the steam-boat, the railroad, the electric telegraph, the penny post, and free trade. The new light, the new life which the Great Revolution flashed into the world, needed these material developments of society to reveal the fulness of its power. The new spirit awaited this building up of the material structure of civilisation to become incarnate. Modern society, of which these are material limbs and organs, has been taken possession of by this vast demiurgic force, and its life from the very foundations is being made anew.

We live in times in which men's minds dwell much on "last days" and "world catastrophes." We laugh scornfully at the cheap prophecies of the end of all things, in which alarmist divines indulge to their profit. But there is enough of truth in their notions, if not to sadden, to solemnize us. A very wise and farsighted man once said, talking over these topics, "These men are right in a sense of which they little dream: it is the end of a world." *

Let us try to realize the entire revolution in all our ideas, habits, and modes of action, in our conception of our relations to our fellow-men, our political principles, our commercial notions, our social theories, and our religious beliefs, which the last quarter of a century has witnessed. Compare the rate at which you are living—I do not mean the rate of pocket, though that is a strong element in the account,

* The late Mr. Erskine, of Linlathen.

but the rate of thought, feeling, and energy—in these as compared with those quiet and comfortable times. Compare the throng of things which now press upon you daily, the crowd of interests which demand attention, and force themselves into the council chamber of your thoughts, with the narrower circle of pursuits, pleasures, and ideas which occupied our fathers little more than a generation ago. Compare the magnitude and complexity of your business transactions, the rapidity, decision, and energy with which they have to be conducted, the incessant strain of thought and care which they involve, with the easy, methodical round of commerce in the days when the goods train, the ocean steamship, and the electric telegraph were unknown.* Realize the severity of the struggle for life in these days in the thronged arena; the prices and expenses which competition inflates, till small traders, small farmers, small proprietors, after a hard struggle, sink in the vortex and disappear. Men have to pay in these days for their mere houses of business, rents which would have made the profit of a tolerable trade half a century ago. Measure the growth of the great centres of commerce, the new cities which are springing up around us, until this London of ours grows to be a place in which it is hard for a man to breathe freely, so vast are its crowded spaces, so terribly difficult are its moral and social problems, so dark are the secrets which it buries

* Of course every age has its stress and strain, its romance and its peril. I am not unmindful of the measure in which our fathers realized all this in describing the heavier pressure of our life.

in its breast. Think of the size of our ships, the tonnage of our ports, the scale and weight of our armaments, the magnitude and destructive energy of our wars. Count the mills, vast and wonderful in their complicated and perfect machinery, which crowd by thousands our Yorkshire and Lancashire valleys, the forges and foundries that stain with their smoke and deafen with their roar the choicest nooks and loveliest glens of our land. Realize, in a word, the vastness and rapidity of our progress, and it will amply justify the word Revolution as descriptive of the broad character of our times.

And yet it is in none of these things, primarily at any rate, that the real power of the Revolution lies. No! It is the utter overthrow of ancient and venerated authority, the searching and to a large extent destructive criticism of ideas and institutions, on which, as on an immovable rock, the order of society was believed to rest; the submission of every thing and every method to the free judgment of reason, by the menstruum which a free Press, a free Platform, and a free Parliament supply. Above all, it is the rising up, not by an act of revolutionary violence, but by the calm, clear recognition of right, of the great mass of the industrial population of the country to claim their full share in the criticism and in the conduct of our public affairs. It is the sense that possesses all thoughtful observers that powers are at work all round us,—not fitfully, not violently, not vengefully, but calmly, certainly, mightily, and by acknowledged right,—the range of which none of us can calculate, and the force of which most of us

dread;—these are the things which seem truly to constitute the elements of a new world.

I am about to endeavour to trace the outline of this great movement of society through the various spheres of our social, ecclesiastical, and spiritual activity as a people. But in the present chapter I confine myself to the intellectual aspects of the revolution, which are to a large extent fundamental to the rest. It is worth our while to note that the stir and strife of the great revolutionary era began, visibly at any rate, in the intellectual sphere. The thinker was at work before the “citizen.” The scholars summoned the Convention. The writers of the last half of the last century, at least the more powerful of them in France, were of a keenly sceptical character. They subjected every institution in Church and State to the mordant acid of what they were pleased to conceive of as pure reason, but which was really the discovery of the natural laws and arrangements of society.*

That order of things which had been handed down from the past, which had a consonance with man’s nature and needs in the days in which it was born, and was a true order in its times, had come at length to be utterly unnatural, utterly unlike the order into which things would have fallen had they been shaken loose and left free to arrange

* The scepticism of such an age as that which preceded the Great Revolution was not altogether so destructive as appears. The constructive function of the great thinkers who are comprehended under the term “Encyclopédistes,” is beginning to be appreciated. Similarly, in another great revolutionary era, Lucretius was very far from being the most destructive thinker of his time.

themselves afresh. Reason or "nature"—and to the school which I am describing they meant much the same thing, their Reason, like that of the positive school which is their legitimate heir, never ranging beyond the "Nature" within and around them—became the God of their idolatry. And, let it be said in their favour, a far nobler God to worship than the God who was presented to them in the Roman Church of their times. This worship of Reason, with the intellectual, supplanted the worship of the God of the Church, whom it was no longer possible for a man with his eyes open to believe in. And, as natural reason is far more in harmony with the fact of things than the artificial theological and ecclesiastical system which had been accepted for ages as the visible kingdom of truth, the sceptical writers, when once they had conquered the ear of the world, dealt crushing blows all round them at the order of things which was tottering to its fall. The rights of man and the reason of things became the leading ideas of the new Gospel; and these have been the true key-notes of all the great political and intellectual movements of society from 1789 until now. The one branch of the movement has landed us, or is landing us, in democracy; the other has developed into that Positive theory and method which, in one shape or other, is affecting very profoundly all the intellectual speculation and invention of our times.

A new spirit was born into the world, or rather I should say entered for the first time fully into the life of the world, at the era of which I speak. There had been no want of the wildest speculation, and

the keenest criticism of the dogmas of the Church, and of the institutions of ecclesiastical and secular society, during the mediæval period. But on the whole they were but the play of the intellect of the scholars. Erigena's scepticism, and Abelard's, did little directly, though they did much ultimately, to affect the actual condition and relations of mankind. But towards the close of the last century, this spirit asserted itself as an organizing principle; it claimed both the right and the power to take charge of the conduct of society. And since that day there has been a constant expansion of the region of its actual influence and reign. The tendency gathers force daily. Whether we are prepared for it or not, whether we like it or not, society is tending to the trial on a large scale, and with thorough completeness, of the democratic principle. The natural rights of men is the idea which is in the ascendant. Against it, the institutions and relations which we have inherited from the past, and which have a firm hold on the sympathies, the memories, and the reverence of mankind, make continually feebler resistance. The democratic party are urging their demands with very startling clearness, and before another generation has passed away we shall see what the natural rights of man can do to bless and to save society.

The progress of these principles has been greatly helped by the rapid material advance of civilisation, of which again they may be regarded as the parent. There can be no question that this grand uprising of the human in humanity, for that is what it means,

has stimulated and sustained that intellectual energy which has created the great instruments of modern progress, the steam engine, the electric telegraph, the penny post, and the doctrine of Free Trade. Nothing is more remarkable, in eras of revolution, than the splendid wealth of faculty which comes to the front, often from the humblest ranks, for the service of the State and of the world. And it is not by accident that the era of our most marvellous material progress is concurrent with the outburst of these new ideas. In 1812 the first steam packet was afloat on the Clyde; in 1830 the first railroad train made the journey between Liverpool and Manchester; in 1836 the first communication was sent by the electric telegraph; in 1840 the first letter was sent under the cover of the penny stamp; and in 1846 the first legislative sanction was accorded to the principle of Free Trade.

And this material progress may be regarded as the indispensable condition of the complete fruitage of the political and intellectual development of the last eighty years. It has fed the movement, and made its triumph possible. Without this immense material expansion of the means and appliances of society, the new doctrines, which shook it to the very foundations, would have remained, as they had remained for ages, mere doctrines, instead of reconstituting and reorganizing the civilised world. It is remarkable that a great increase in the wealth and material means of society has preceded every great era of the world's progress. The Greek era was heralded by contact with the wealthy and luxu-

rious East; the establishment of the Roman empire by the Oriental conquests, which threw immense wealth into Rome. The thirteenth century, the critical mediæval period, was preceded by the Crusades, and the influx both of wealth and of new ideas and habits which commerce with the East had generated; while the mighty sixteenth century, which commences the modern era, was indebted largely to the discovery of the New World, and to the wealth and the wonder of which was so fertile a parent, for that stimulus which made it on the whole the peerless age in human history. So now the rapid and enormous increase in the wealth and the appliances of society, is an important condition of the revolution which marks our times.

It is the fashion now in some quarters abroad to talk loftily about the decadence of England. M. Thiers, in a remarkable speech made before the outbreak of the war, affected to pity us because by our vast enterprises we have made ourselves so dependent on the goodwill of mankind. The nation which has given to the world every great instrument which in modern times has constituted an era in its progress,—the steam engine, the spinning jenny, the steamboat, the railroad, the electric telegraph, and the penny post,—gives signs of vitality which any nation on earth might glory in being able to manifest; and while we can work for the world as we are working, there is little fear that the spring of our life will fail. “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.” We believe in it as a nation profoundly. We look for our wealth and the

springs of our strength in the work which we can do for mankind. M. Thiers would have France isolate her commerce, grow what she needs as much as possible within her own borders, and depend as little as may be on the good offices of the nations around her. He thinks that then she would be able to deliver her blows with crushing force whenever war might break out, and would leave but few points vulnerable to the foe. It is his simple political philosophy. It is the philosophy of fear, of paganism, and night. We have learnt our lesson in a nobler school, the Christian school—the school whose spirit is not of fear, but of “power and of love and of sound mind;” and we have no apprehension about the future. Happy France! strong in isolation, in self-sufficiency, in power to affright and chastise the nations! Unhappy England! strong only in industry, in ministry, in goodwill, in power to serve the world, and in an honour and love which really underlie the jealousy which our prosperity generates, and the impatience which our independence provokes, in the nations which yet turn to us as a refuge in their hours of need.*

In surveying a field so wide, it is important to select central rather than merely salient points. We must do our best to discover the heart of

* These words were spoken before the outbreak of the war. I have let them stand. Little could any one have dreamt early in the year how soon and how terribly events would write their comment on the policy which has been always popular in France. While these sheets pass through the press, M. Thiers is flying from court to court praying for the interposition of the foreigner to save France from utter ruin; while the whole Continent looks to England to initiate the action of the neutral powers.

the movement, and to distinguish the ideas which seem to influence the whole era in its most diverse schools, while they lay the firmest hold on the most constructive and influential minds of the time. It is very easy to say that this is a sceptical age, an age of keen and irreverent inquiry into the reasons of all things human, and things too, not a few, which have been taken to be divine. Scepticism is a large, vague, and most misleading word. There is a sense in which every age is sceptical, and bound to be sceptical. Each age looks into the truth, and demands the reason, of that which comes down to it with the authority of the past, laying much of it aside as useless, always to the great dread and distress of a large section of the community. And some generations are more sceptical than others, in the irreverent sense of the word. They inquire in a bitter, malignant spirit—which is always a reaction,—and seem to take a sardonic delight in the overthrow of the dearest beliefs and hopes of mankind.

But there is a specialty in the intellectual habits and tendencies of this generation which it is worth our while to consider closely. Certainly there has been a tremendous shaking of all our settled beliefs and mental habits. A large class of our intellectual leaders, perhaps the largest class of thinkers of the first power, declines to take note in its inquiries and researches of the beliefs of man about the spiritual world, his own spiritual nature, and the Book which has hitherto been accepted by Christendom as the source of all our knowledge of God and the

spiritual sphere. But there is little bitterness, little malignity, strictly speaking little irreverence, in the way in which the great topics of thought are handled. The whole world of thoughts and things which the Christian believer holds dear, and which in his judgment enter very profoundly into all the organization of our domestic and public life, is quietly put aside and passed by. These vigorous thinkers hold it to be a world of which we can have absolutely no knowledge, and about which, therefore, inquiry is quite useless. There is a strong tendency, in much of the ruling thought of our times, quietly to ignore the whole sphere of Christian revelation, Christian belief, and Christian activity; to treat it as having no basis in the accessible nature of things, and to concentrate the whole attention of the mind of the age on the actual condition and constitution of nature and of man. No question is asked as to how things came to be, and whither they tend; it is sufficient to discuss simply what they are, and what they can themselves tell us of the laws of their action and passion, whereby we may learn something of their future.

Between the years 1830 and 1842 a work appeared in France, entitled "*Cours de Philosophie Positive*," by M. Auguste Comte, which there can be no question has exercised a very powerful influence on some of the ablest minds in our generation, and has affected in some considerable measure the course of modern thought. I am not about to attempt any criticism of the Positive philosophy. I believe that it is only a symptom, and not a cause, of the intellectual

tendencies of our times. It puts with singular clearness and force the conclusions to which many lines of speculation were converging, which had their starting-point in the latter half of the last century. It states further, with calm decision, the antipathy of a large and influential school of thinkers to the intrusion into their sphere of any considerations connected with matters so impalpable as a Divine author and ruler of the creation, or a spiritual nature in man capable of searching the deep things of God. M. Comte is distinctly an apostle of science. He devoted himself to its ministry with singular intensity; and he claims for it simply the rule of the world. God deposed, science reigns.

It is quite possible to attach too much importance to this system of philosophy, and the singular arrogance of its advocates rather tends to interfere with a candid consideration of its claims. But none can afford to overlook it, who desire to acquaint themselves with the influences which are acting most powerfully on the intellectual progress of our times. We shall hear much, not perhaps of the philosophy itself, for M. Comte himself slew it as a system before he died, but of its spirit and method, in the scientific inquiries, investigations, and controversies of these coming years. Scientific, I say, for the deepest interest of the age is in science. Science occupies the foreground; theological, psychological, and metaphysical questions fall into the rear.

There is of course no lack of theological and metaphysical study at this or at any time, and

science is preparing both for the theologian and the metaphysician ample work in the future. Able minds are still busy as ever about these problems ; and competent champions never fail, and are never likely to fail, to stand forth to defend the Bible, the Church, and spiritual philosophy from the assaults of their foes. But still the main interest of the age goes with the men of science, and chiefly for two reasons. In the first place, science is the true author of the most powerful agencies and instruments which are at work in the extension of our material civilisation. And, in the second place, there is a very deep feeling abroad, working very strongly in men's minds, that we need to know immensely more than we have at present mastered about these wonderful, these awful worlds. There is a strong conviction that the time has come for a great expansion of our knowledge about man and about the creation ; and the doctors of science, the men who can enlarge our knowledge, are listened to with an interest and a submission which no teachers in any other departments of our knowledge can command. Nor can we shut our eyes to the fact that some of the most influential teachers of this school, those who seem to be the advancing teachers, whose word the world listens to with most interest and hope, assume an attitude with regard to all that is most surely believed among us in the Church, not of antagonism, not of hatred, but of lofty and supreme indifference. Those inward experiences which to the Apostle were the surest things in the Creation, that continuous and profound

penetration of the natural by the supernatural sphere which the Incarnation declares, and which to us is the most familiar fact in our view of man and of the universe, to them have no substance of reality ; they are facts which no observation falling within their sphere can verify, and from which instructed intelligence can deduce no certain laws.

Do not let us misunderstand the kind of attitude which even such a man as M. Comte sustains towards Christianity. It is nothing like malignant atheism. The age of malignant atheism in England is over. It belongs to a time in which the rule of the Church is an ecclesiastical despotism, which offers an image of God under the form of an almighty tyrant to mankind. For the malignant atheism of the age in which Shelley wrote of an atheist's death,

“ There is no God !

Nature confirms the faith his death-groan sealed,”

the world had ultimately to thank the selfishness and the tyranny of the Church. Avowed atheism in the secular is always the shadow of secret atheism in the spiritual sphere. The intellectual attitude is now quite changed. The tone now is, We know nothing about this spiritual region of which you tell us ; we can find no facts that will remain facts in our grasp, which we can examine, register, and group under laws. All knowledge, says M. Comte, has its theological, metaphysical, and positive stages of development. The time was when every thunder-storm was believed to be the voice of an offended God, every flash the stroke of His angry hand. The

time came, (Has it come? The battle about the meaning of the thunder-storm at St. Peter's when the great dogma was proclaimed leads one to doubt it,) when men got to know enough of the vast and orderly system of the universe to be sure that this account of the matter was childish. Then they had visions of some mysterious subtle essences, metaphysical abstractions, or universal fluids, which were behind the phenomena of Creation, and were the hidden condition of their order. Science, M. Comte says, in turn outgrew this account of the matter, —though we say again, Has it outgrown it? Dr. Tyndall's Lecture at Liverpool still tempts one to doubt.* Now, we are told, science has settled down to the third or the Positive stage, and confesses that we know just nothing but facts and sequences. Things follow other things with a grand regularity which enables us to formulate the sequence, and to establish it as a law; and there our knowledge ends, and must end. How or why things follow in this order we know not, and cannot know. Cause and effect we are told are meaningless terms to us;

* Professor Huxley's language, "If it were given to me to look beyond the abyss of geologically recorded time to the still more remote period when the earth was passing through chemical and physical conditions, which it can no more see again than a man can recall his infancy, I should expect to be a witness of the evolution of living protoplasm from not living matter," is surely very marvellous, in face of his rigid demonstration, which his love of truth constrained him to develop with singular power, that nothing of the kind had ever come within the ken of the faculties of man. Is science reverting under these able leaders, and Dr. Tyndall's Lecture was quite on the same key, from the positive to the metaphysical stage; and may we hope that in time, and with higher truth, it will find its way wholesomely back to the theological stage once more?

while the action of a living will behind all the phenomena of the Creation is a mere speculation of the fancy: no sign of it anywhere appears. This is about the sum of the affirmations and negations, from this point of view, of the Positive philosophy.

And there seems to be a very strong tendency in an influential scientific school to deal with the whole of what we understand by spiritual knowledge and experience, as M. Comte dealt with the theological stage of knowledge; that is, to treat it quietly as a superstition, and to go on investigating facts and formulating laws as if the Bible, and the God of the Bible, and the supernatural facts of the Bible, had never been heard of in our world. The idea that the whole spiritual sphere, of which we believe that the Bible is a revelation, is intangible by human faculty and unreal, spreading as it does in these days, and affecting young minds with special force, does without question very seriously withdraw much of the young and ardent intellect of the day from the sphere and the service of the Church.

I am not about to attempt to confute these views, or to show how shallow and false they are. Man's experience and needs will be their true confutation. Few could be more unfit for a philosophical confutation of philosophical ideas than myself. I do not touch the philosophical argument; those who wish may find it amply discussed in the higher current literature of the day. In one form or other the question is always cropping out, and it is the great intellectual controversial subject of our times. But I think that something may be said in the way of

accounting for its rise, progress, and peculiar prominence, which may be helpful to some young thinkers. If we can understand how things come to be, it helps us greatly to estimate their position and to measure their worth.

I will quote one or two passages from the "*Cours de Philosophie Positive*," in which M. Comte develops his antipathy to theological ideas. And I do it, not because I regard the Positive philosophy as at all formidable as a system. I have not the least right to speak with authority upon such a matter; but as far as I am able to judge, the influence of M. Comte as the founder of a system is but limited, and has nearly reached its limits; but I regard it as a remarkable form of a very profound and widespread tendency, which affects schools having little formal relation with the Positive; and which a Bampton lecturer in his "*Limits of Religious Thought*" seems to me to have carried up into the spiritual sphere. The way in which that book was welcomed on all hands, was a somewhat startling revelation of the measure in which the Church itself has suffered to steal over it a sense of the unreality of its power to penetrate the secrets and to grasp the objects of the spiritual world. Well says Mr. Maurice, in his criticism on St. Augustine ("*Philosophy of the First Six Centuries*," p. 111): "Acquiescence in doubt is only another name for acquiescence in sensual gratifications. If the mind has nothing actual to grasp, the body, which has, must maintain its superiority." This indicates justly the direction in which such a philosophy must drive us at last.

In his 23^e Leçon, the main subject of which is Kepler's Laws, M. Comte expresses in a few pointed sentences the animus of his system as against the theological philosophy: "L'ensemble de ces phénomènes provoque naturellement une remarque philosophique fort essentielle, sur l'opposition nécessaire et de plus en plus prononcée de l'esprit positif contre l'esprit théologique ou métaphysique, à mesure que la géométrie céleste s'est perfectionnée d'avantage. Le caractère fondamental de toute philosophie théologique est d'envisager tous les phénomènes comme gouvernés par des volontés, et, par conséquent, comme éminemment variables et irréguliers, au moins virtuellement. Au contraire, la philosophie positive les conçoit comme assujettis, à l'abri de tout caprice, à des lois invariables, qui permettent de les prévoir exactement.—*Cours de Philosophie Positive*, tom. ii., p. 216.

At the commencement of the Biological Section, Leçon 40^e, the same thought is repeated; also at the commencement of the chapters on Physics, the reader will find the point somewhat more fully discussed.

Now the first thing which strikes one on reading these passages is, that what M. Comte calls "will" in the theological scheme of the universe, really is caprice. Variety, change, uncertainty, are the elements which he seems unable to separate from the action of intelligent will, though the order of a great government, or of a great railway system even, might, one would think, have given him a clue to a more just idea. These elements he seeks to elimi-

nate from the order of the world. It is worth our while to consider how in a scientific mind these notions become associated with the conception which the theologian connects with this order of the world. M. Comte and a great school of those who think with him so far, imagine that the God in whom the Christian believes must be for ever meddling with the otherwise settled order of the Creation. And the philosophers say they can find no signs whatever of meddling, but a grand invariable order, beautiful, solemn, awful, in its stability, which can have suffered no tampering, no break of sequence from the first days, if ever there were first days, until now.

Where did he get this idea of God, this capricious, meddling Deity? I answer unhesitatingly, from the theology of the Church. Consider the position which the theologians have occupied towards science from the day when science began to be. Is there a single great principle which science has established on its own indisputable basis, which the theologians have not at once denounced as impious, on the ground of their own superior knowledge of the plan of the Creation and of the ideas of God? The notion in the theological mind has been that in the Bible God had furnished man, not so much with a means of a living and fruitful knowledge of Himself, but rather with a complete ground-plan of the Creation, which justified them, the experts of the theological schools, in at once pronouncing authoritative judgment on the truth of the doctrines of science, and even on the facts on which they were supposed to rest. The idea of the movement of the

earth they resisted with fierce and passionate determination; they did not hesitate to employ bonds and stripes on its advocates. This and every great doctrine of science has had to fight its way desperately against the opposition of a school which had all the force of this world at its disposal, and which claimed the absolute right and power to assay every scientific doctrine, and stamp it for currency among men. The way in which scientific ideas have fought their way against this tremendous phalanx, simply because they were true, though their truth was a matter which very few intellects could gauge, is about the strongest proof extant of the power of truth over human hearts, and of the noble faith of man in man. And surely it is an omen of high promise, if we theologians would but take the comfort of it, for the future of the world.

And we must remember that those theologians, while branding the Copernican doctrine as impious, on the ground of their superior knowledge of the structure of the Creation and the ways of God, were believing themselves, and teaching others to believe, a whole host of most idle and childish tales of miraculous interventions on behalf of their adored saints; the suspension of the most settled laws of nature for the most foolish or contemptible of objects,—to get a saint across a river, to enable him to fly over a mountain, to make night in his prison-house bright as day, to keep him awake by infernal howlings, or to perfume his dirty corpse with the balmy odours of heaven. These tales by tens of thousands were circulated about Christendom with

the imprimatur of the Church ; they were believed with simple credulity under the influence of a priesthood to whom every new scientific doctrine seemed impious, in the country in which M. Comte was nurtured. There is some way of accounting, is there not? for the propensity of the *savans* to identify the action of the Divine will with inconstancy, variety, and caprice. It is M. Agassiz who says that every scientific truth is first denied, secondly branded as contrary to religion, and thirdly accepted as a thing which was already perfectly well known.

But then it may be said there is an intelligent as well as a perverse view of the Bible in its relation to science. *We* do not fight against scientific demonstrations with theological weapons, some of us may say. We look on the Bible as mainly a revelation of spiritual truth ; and surely there is a possible harmony between a sound scientific philosophy and such a spirit as this. Most surely ; and it will appear in time, but not yet. We are not altogether unobstructive, in our way, to the progress of science. How far is it believed in England at this moment, by the great majority of our theologians, that once the whole system of the universe, for our sun cannot be detached from the most distant worlds, paused in its motion, stood still in the midst of the heavens, that a people chosen by Providence for a high destiny might take a tremendous vengeance on their foes? Some can see that the marvellous passage which records it is a poetical fragment, perhaps of some heroic song,

and that it expresses in vivid poetical language the remembrance which the people cherished of some remarkable atmospheric phenomenon, which they connected in their minds with a long, stern, and to them glorious day's work. But there are millions of theological minds in England at this moment which would shrink with horror from such an explanation, and insist on the literal truth of a miracle, whose tremendous disproportion, from a moral point of view, fills us with amazement that it should ever have been cast as a stumbling-block in the philosopher's path.

I am well aware, of course, that behind this there is the whole question of miracle, which I do not attempt to argue here. I am not arguing questions, but trying to account for states of mind and tendencies of thought by showing how difficulties arise. The question of miracle is certainly a true ground of contest between the scientific doctors and the theologians; and it can only be settled when a yet higher question is settled, Is there, or is there not, a moral order of the world? Till we are prepared to give up the Resurrection,—and when we give up that, it seems to me, it is but one step further to give up Christ,—miracle remains an essential element of the Christian system. But that subject can only be successfully approached from the higher ground; it is a part of the great controversy, the controversy of controversies, Is there, or is there not, a moral order under the hand of a moral ruler of the world?

But the question to which we recur, Is there not

possible an entire harmony between the philosophers and the theologians on the basis of a rational interpretation of the Bible, is fairly open, I think, to the answer, that we have not yet arrived at a rational interpretation of the Bible in relation to the doctrines of scientific truth.

I entertain a firm conviction that the immense expansion of our knowledge of man and of the universe which science has effected, the new worlds of wonder, of mystery, yet of stately law, which are being daily unveiled, demand, necessitate, an immense revolution in our ideas of the function of Revelation with relation to the natural order and constitution of the world. We accept the revolution unwillingly. It is natural that we should do so; all revolutions have to be accomplished by pressure. The men of science are pressing us. We may give way on point after point; but what is wanted before the harmony is possible is an entire revolution in our ideas. I cannot wonder that the apostles of science,—and it has a great and noble company who are loyally devoted to its truth,* and are as ready, if need were, to die for it, as ever Christian martyr was to die for his Gospel,—have become terribly impatient of the theologians.

Looking at the bitter and prolonged resistance which they have offered to every scientific doctrine,

* I quote gladly the noble words of Professor Tyndall at Liverpool. "They,"—the really philosophical defenders of the doctrine of uniformity,—“have but one desire—to know the truth. They have but one fear—to believe a lie.”

the narrow, shallow, and selfish views which, as a class, they have entertained and enforced as to the nature and range of the kingdom of God, the manner in which they have conceived of the mightiest and most universal agencies as chartered for the service and salvation of very common and very limited sections of the great human host, it is not a matter which should surprise us if an influential school of philosophy has come to entertain the notion that theological ideas are simply in the way of inquirers after scientific truth. They are saying practically, and with some bitterness, Get out of our way with your whole apparatus of theory as to what things must be, why they are, and for what they are there. We want just now to settle a prior question,—What they *are*; and for this an unbiassed mind is essential. Leave us free to inquire of themselves what they can tell us without any pre-judgments, or idols of the imagination, to obscure our vision; and carry on in your way, if you will, your investigations into what you are pleased to call spiritual truth.

And this is the enterprise of a school whose members are distinguished by culture and intellectual power. And it is being vigorously pursued. Men are trying to understand the world and man, without the knowledge of His mind who made the world, and set man as His own image in the midst. It is a hopeless enterprise; and bitter sorrow, that worst of all pain, hunger of soul and heart, is at the end of it. M. Comte himself is a solemn warning to us of what it must come to in the end. Those

familiar with his history will know that in his last years, his heart hungering after a richer nourishment of its life than facts and laws could furnish him, he set himself to work to invent a religion, and ended the great enterprise of his life in utter wreck. But for the present the experiment goes on. We have so alienated the philosophers by our miserably narrow conceptions of the kingdom of God, the ways of the Divine government, and the ends which God is pursuing by the vast mechanism, material and vital, which is in full play around us—ends which men think must be something larger than the salvation of a little company of the kind of people whom we call saints—that for the present the two spheres will be largely in opposition, and we may expect to see some of the very ablest of our thinkers struggling to discover what they can of the handiwork of the Creator, ignorant or careless of Himself.

There are two philosophical systems, the Positive in science, and the Utilitarian in morals, both wielding a wide influence, and likely to wield it, which strike at the very root of the ideas which sustain the system and influence of the Church. They both spring from the same root, and they may both be regarded as a kind of inevitable protest against the narrow views of Man and of Nature which those have suffered themselves to entertain who profess to start from the Divine idea. We ask ourselves what God tells us about Man and about Nature, and the answer which we get is very much the echo of our own thought. The large-minded theologians, who pray that they may know, and are content to wait and to

suffer until they do know, the height and the depth, the breadth and the length of the Divine thought, are rare ; while Legion is the name of those who formulate their own thoughts, and announce them and contend for them as Divine. Men, deeply dissatisfied with the narrow views of man and of his world which are current to the orthodox schools, betake themselves with fresh zeal to direct and independent investigation. And so the age of science grows.

Science means knowledge, more knowledge of man and of the world. The Positive in science, the Utilitarian in morals, utterly as they may be unable to satisfy the human heart, or even to answer the importunate questions which the mind will urge on those who shut it out from the spiritual sphere, may yet have this present advantage. Studiously observing the method of rigorous investigation of facts, and not troubling themselves to inquire into the meaning of those facts, or their reasons, they are likely to widen largely our actual knowledge of the world ; and that will be to us just now an immense gain. The freedom from pre-judgment is, in the present condition of things, a clear help to investigation ; and this method may have special advantages for discovery which other and juster methods may not fully share. The utilitarian system in morals, for instance, occupying itself exclusively with the facts of life, digesting out of observation and experience its moral rule, will be likely to addict itself to the study of the phenomena of life and of society, with an energy which will issue in a great enlargement of our knowledge of the human world. A man

who walks with his eyes studiously and keenly bent on the dust, will find many things in the dust which will fill him with wonder, and which it behoves him greatly to know. But no one can suppose that it is meant to be the permanent attitude and occupation of the man. The time will come when he will stand upright, and take in the impressions of a far wider world. The present attitude of science promises a glorious addition to the sum of our knowledge of Man, Society, and Nature; and for this especially the age is pining. This larger sphere of knowledge, when it is won, will have to be brought into relation with the sphere of man's universal knowledge, will have to be welded into the harmony of that complete system of truth which, like the great world outside, has God for its Creator and its sun; the key-note of whose concord, the laws of whose motion, the theologians, did they but understand their calling, would interpret to the world.

The main point of my remarks then, in brief, is this. There is a very able and influential school of thinkers which draws itself off, and seeks to draw off mankind, from that spiritual sphere of thought and interest in which truly lie all our springs. It contents itself mainly with the dry bones of man and of the universe; and all that makes man a living spirit, and the universe a home of living spirits, it suffers calmly and even contemptuously to pass out of sight. But it addicts itself with singular energy and integrity to the discovery and classification of the facts which fall within its sphere.

I mention in this connection no names of living thinkers. It is so easy to brand this man or that man as sceptical, because of his philosophical opinions, when in the sight of God he may be more reverent towards truth, and the God of truth, than his critics. But many names could easily be mentioned of men whose fidelity to truth is conspicuous; to whom a fact is as sacred as a text is to us. Now we have but one thing to do. Let us leave the things to speak for the God who made them. Let us be sure that facts, honestly studied, will, in the long run, and by far paths it may be, conduct men to Him.

We theologians have a desperate dread of everything which does not come to men in some way from the Bible, or which has not somewhere the imprimatur of the Church. A fact is a text from another book, also of God's writing; it bears the imprimatur of a yet more sacred hand. Let us believe that things are on the side of God, and not on the side of the devil; that if men are honestly getting at the truth of things, there is a witness for God there, louder than any witness which we can bear for Him, and which no philosophy will be able to gainsay. Is it the theologians only to whom the Spirit is promised to guide them into all truth? If the philosophers are out of tune with us, let us remember how far we have provoked and indeed created the discord. Let us consider how far, how very far we are from knowing that great world of which we talk so glibly, and concerning which we ask them to accept our thoughts as the thoughts

of God. If we have a right to say to the thinkers, Make your science more reverent, they have the same right, nay, a far stronger right, to say to the believers, Make your theology more large and true.

Sad enough are the fruits of a godless science. Sadder still are the fruits of a bare and soulless theology. If the age is sceptical, and I have endeavoured to define the sense in which the age does seem to be sceptical, let us look within. We may be sure that the seeds of nine-tenths of the doubt and unbelief of mankind are to be found in some false witness for God which we bear. An arrogant and dogmatic Church creates as its censor, and ultimately as its scourge, what it denounces as a contemptuous and godless science. We must enlarge our own borders, as Zion of old was bidden to do; we must take wider and deeper views of God, of Man, of the Bible, of the Creation, if there is to be common ground in our Christian belief for us and the leaders of the intellectual progress of men.

And common ground there must be. We shall find it at length, and hold it the more firmly for this present separation. Days of trial are coming. Scientific truths, especially with regard to the genesis of life, are looming in the distance, which may give a still ruder shock to our theological ideas than anything which they have had yet to endure. But we too have a rock, a sure rock of fact, to rest upon; and seeing that these things cannot be spoken against, we might learn from the good sense of a heathen that we ought to be

quiet, to trust, and to hope. We have our part to do ; and the duty presses on us quite as stringently as on our antagonists. Narrowness and bigotry are sins in the eye of heaven of as deep a dye as irreverence. We have earned no right to play the censor, or even to complain of the sceptical attitude of much of the scientific intelligence of our times, until we have wrought out, broad and free, a theology which shall be lofty, deep, and wide as the Gospel, inscribed once more with the well-nigh obliterated legend, GOD IS LOVE.

II.

THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION.

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THE last chapter was devoted to the consideration of some important features of the intellectual progress of the last quarter of a century. I pass on in the present to consider some of the social aspects and effects of the revolution. It is the true order. All social movements descend from the intellectual sphere. That ferment of ideas which set society seething during the last half of the last century, which cast up the foam and the scum of the great French Revolution, was at the same time, though less visibly, laying the basis and forming the rudiments of a new order of society. Society has been building since on the foundations which were then deposited, and by the lines which were then laid down. The great mass of the French nation asserted the right of self-government in the most emphatic and terrible way; and deeper than that—for government is but a means to an end—made the world understand that the fundamental question in all social arrangements is, not the welfare of classes or orders, but the good estate

of the whole mass of the people. If the classes are to flourish, it must be by partaking of the life and the growth of the whole.

And whence did this idea arise? Like all the great constitutive ideas which have moulded powerfully the institutions of society, it descended from the superior sphere. It is the child of Christianity. The Church first set the image of a new social order before the minds of men; and in the Church this is fundamental, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." The picture of a perfect and blessed human community which is presented in the closing verses of the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, has been an inspiration to Europe through all the Christian ages. It is not a little remarkable that in the French fictions which are deeply tinged with the ideas of socialism, and are regarded as something like its gospel, the almost necessary figure is the model Christian priest, penetrated by the ideas of self-renunciation and sacrifice, and having a vision before him of a perfect human estate, whose original, in a purity which the revolutionary sentiment rapidly degrades, is to be found in the Word of God.

Before dwelling on the social progress of the last generation, I directed your thoughts to the movement in the intellectual sphere. It is, as I have said, the right order; ideas are born in the toiling, teeming brains of the world's great thinkers with sore travail, with strain and pain which the multitude little appreciate, before they descend to take their

places at the world's hearth-fire. But there is a truth which lies yet nearer to the heart of the matter than this. The intellectual life of a generation is really fed from spiritual springs. Intellectual questions themselves descend from a yet higher region. It would be interesting and instructive to trace the development of society from this point of view, and to show how spiritual interests and anxieties, endeavours to solve spiritual problems and to forward spiritual enterprises, have given the great impulse at critical eras to the intellectual development of mankind. The more we study the question, not in the light of modern philosophical theories, which have taken the form of a violent, and, as I have already confessed, a not unnatural reaction against the spiritual, but in the broad light of history, the more thoroughly shall we be convinced that the first impulse to development in philosophy, literature, art, and science comes from the spiritual sphere. The infancy of all the arts and sciences of Christendom was nursed by the Christian Church. It was the desire to construct theodicies, or rather let us say the need of justifying the ways of God to man, which gave birth to modern philosophy. The first great poem of the modern world, the root of very much of its higher intellectual development, was a noble, pure, and solemnly earnest exposition of the ways of God in the just government of the human race. In church architecture and church literary activity the fine arts had their beginnings; they are the pure children of the cloister; while astronomy, that science which M. Comte lifts so

triumphantly out of the confusion of the theological into the serene order of the Positive sphere, sent its first students for their inspiration to the calculation of the times of the festivals of the Church.

However men may rebel against the conclusion, history will compel them to recognize that religion alone, in the earlier stages of the growth of any art or science, afforded to men a stimulus strong enough to enable them to face the toil and the pain which all birth and nurture involve. The love and the fear of God alone helped men through the tremendous labour imposed by the task of the first clearance of the intellectual forest, the first breaking up of the sods of the fields of thought. The Comtist might answer to this assertion, Precisely so, that is just the superstitious or theological stage through which every science passes on its way to the Positive. But we rejoin, That which has strength and wisdom to nurture and educate the youth of the arts and sciences, deserves, and shall receive, a nobler and more permanent name. Children pass out of the motherly order and influence of the home, not into a weary waste of fact and law, but under the fatherly rule of God.

We are prone to think in these days that interest is the main and sufficient stimulus to production. It may be, I have no doubt that it is, to such production as ours, made easy and cheap as it is by men who drew their inspiration from deeper springs. Take the most elaborately ornamented or illustrated volume which the luxurious culture of our times has produced, and for which money to any extent is

forthcoming, and set it beside an illuminated manuscript, on which some dim-eyed old monk continued to work till his hand was paralyzed by death, and you will be able to estimate the contemptible worth of the strongest mercenary pressure as an instrument of production, compared with delight in beauty and the love of God.

The intellectual agitation which led on to the Revolution must itself be traced to a spiritual root. The Reformation was its true parent. Very early in the history of the Reformation, new theories of society and of human rights, of the reconstruction of the social order on a new basis of freedom, which in its first form was libertine, made themselves heard in Europe. These were the first tremulous movements of the Revolution. And these themselves were but, as it were, the distant echo of that shaking of the social order, that endeavour to subvert society and then reconstruct it from its very foundations, which attended the first advent of Christianity to the world. We can gather from the Epistles of the New Testament, that the wildest social theories were entertained by enthusiastic disciples of the ideas of the Gospel. The Apostles set themselves resolutely against all such attempts at subversion and reconstruction, not because they did not believe that Christianity came to make all things new, but because they desired a yet more radical reconstruction; they sought to rebuild on a yet deeper foundation, the regeneration of individual human hearts. But when we measure the energy of the subversive forces which Christianity introduced into the world,

one is filled with wonder at the moderation and firm self-control of the Apostles. To me it always seems one of the most decisive marks of the ruling of a higher Hand.

The children of the Reformation very soon began, sorely to Luther's perplexity, as the students of those times know well, to dream of a new order of society. New-Jerusalem doctrines, and vigorous movements towards a social state in which the most licentious liberty should reign, attended the progress of the new truth. I think that it would not be difficult to show that the anti-Christian and sometimes blankly atheistic doctrines which stirred the heart of society so deeply when the ferment of the great Revolution was beginning to work, were but developments of ideas which the saints in the early post-Reformation days had imported into the world. Luther, like the Apostles, held them in stern check while his influence lasted. But the ideas were germinant and fruitful; the wildest excesses of the Revolution were but the acting out on a national scale of principles and aims which had already revealed their ghastly form within the area of the Reformation Church.

A very important point in the philosophy of modern history here occurs. France rejected the Reformation, and the vigorous fermentation of thought and of life, which worked itself off, so to speak, in Germany, while the spirit was still fresh and potent in men's hearts. Did she not thereby inevitably doom herself to work off the same fermentation in a more bitter form, and with more

destructive results, before she could overtake the progress of the most advanced nations of the West? And is not the fermentation working still? These are questions which I can only suggest as I pass on.

But there is one point, which seems to me of large importance, on which for a moment I must dwell. I have spoken of the movement whose form and pressure in its broad outlines I am endeavouring to delineate, as the child of Christianity. Many of my readers very likely will shrink from any association of the pure and beautiful ideas which Christianity brought into the world, with the ghastly orgies of cruelty, lust, and impiety which the Revolution as it progressed set before mankind. And yet Christianity is the true mother of the ideas which were working most powerfully in men's minds in that stormy era, and they were mainly Christian visions and Christian hopes which the passion and pride and lust of man so stained, desecrated, and destroyed. The vision of a new order of society, in which liberty, equality, and fraternity should reign; in which tyrants should no more oppress, and judges no more frown down the poor; in which hungry eyes and gaunt faces would no longer appeal to heaven in vain for bread; in which jealousy, suspicion, and rivalry would be banished by the sentiment of brotherhood; in which war should be impossible, and crime unknown; in which the good and beautiful gifts of God should be every man's possession by birthright, and life should become gay and glad again, crowned with plenty and bright with song,—these were the dreams with

which men in the early days of the Revolution, before the tiger had tasted blood, kept their feasts of fraternity, clasping each other's necks in the streets of Paris, and proclaiming a millennium of peace and of joy.

And these visions were born from no vapour of an infernal cauldron. You may read their bright originals in the visions of seers and prophets which God has set in His Word, to light by their onward glow the path of the world through many long and sad generations. Their fulfilment in forms of perfect beauty and purity, of which the keenest visionary has had but feeble dreams, will be the work of Christ, when that most splendid of all prophetic visions is realized at last,—

“Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings : and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron : I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders ; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down ; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself : for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.”—Isaiah lx. 15—20.

“Give the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of

the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear Thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass : as showers that water the earth. In His days shall the righteous flourish ; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. . . . Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him : all nations shall serve Him. For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth ; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence : and precious shall their blood be in His sight."—Psalm lxxii. 1—8, 11—14.*

But the question will occur, and may be fairly pressed, if there was so much that was heavenly in the vision, why these torrents of blood, these outbursts of savagery, these orgies of lust? Alas! this is the chronic misery of humanity. It is the old tale. Man going about to establish his own righteousness, and refusing to submit himself to the righteousness of God. Seeking to establish his Paradise regained by the strength of his own energy and passions, instead of seeking it in God's way, in Christ's way, by purging the pride and lust and passion out of his own heart. Man is ever seeking to remedy all the mischief and to right all the wrong of the world from without, by constructing a new order of society, which his own ill-governed nature

* There are these visions or memories of a golden age to be met with in all the chief pagan literatures. The classical are fully familiar. In Hardy's "Eastern Monachism" (p. 178) there is an interesting passage describing the peace, prosperity, splendour, and miraculous order of the reign of Asoka, the great Buddhist king. But the Bible visions stand out incomparable in their claim for justice to the oppressed, and in their tenderness to the poor.

soon makes a den of blasphemy, or a shambles of blood. God is ever moving him to the Christian regeneration of society, which must begin where it began of old, in the depths of individual human hearts. "THY KINGDOM COME; THY WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN."

Christianity has fulfilled the previsions of the Thessalonians. "These men which have turned the world upside down, are come hither also." While with the one hand it maintains and settles on a firmer basis the order of society, its spirit is the great revolutionary force, and has been at the root of all the revolutions and reformations of the Christian world. It entered very largely into the structure of the feudal order, which reigned through the middle ages with absolute supremacy in Christian society, whose forms have endured, much fractured and contorted by the modern spirit, but still strong enough to hold society together, down to our own times. No doubt it would be a grand mistake to say that Christianity created feudalism, just as it would be a grand mistake to say that Christianity created that position and influence of woman which have distinguished so nobly the German peoples, or that sentiment of personal honour which flowered in chivalry, and which lies at the root of so much which differences Christian from classical society. Christianity did not create these things, but it cherished and nurtured them. The seeds were already there in the Teutonic nature; we can see the traces of it already, in that remarkable monograph which Tacitus wrote for the

censure of his times. But Christianity was the sunlight which forced them to a brilliant and fruitful maturity, when they were rooted in a richer soil than mere nature could furnish, through the action of the Christian Revelation on the world. There is something in this wonderful preparedness of the German nature for the reception of Christian ideas, and for their full development, which furnishes to the thoughtful observers of the condition of human progress sure indications of the working of a higher than a human hand.

Feudalism, then, was not created by Christianity, nor was it the gift of the Church to society. It grew out of native tendencies, and the exigencies of the times. But Christianity very powerfully leavened it, and lent a consecrating touch to the bonds of relationship with which it bound the various classes to each other, and to the head. We are prone to speak of feudalism as an institution of the dark ages, and as in its nature of congenial darkness. It is identified in our minds very much with ignorance and tyranny—with the privilege, the almost absolute power, of an aristocratic class, and the cruel oppression of the great mass of the people. We think of the lords as despots, the peasants as serfs, bound to fulfil their behests; compelled to till their lands in peaceful times, and in war to follow their banners in quarrels of whose merits they were wholly ignorant; bound to serve the lord with their bodies in battle, to ransom him in captivity, and to avenge him in death. We speak of society as divided by rigid lines into classes, and stereotyped in its order—each class

having its own status, its rights and duties, clearly defined, but cut off sharply from every other class, with no hope of progress save within its own very limited sphere. In short, we conceive of it as an order hard, rigid, stern, oppressive, and pitiless as Fate.

It seems difficult to discover the Christian element here. And yet feudalism was Christian at heart. It was really a system of duties rather than of rights and immunities. The essential matter in the feudal order of society was that every man had his duty to his superior clearly defined, while as clearly defined was the superior's duty to him. The lord could no doubt claim much of his vassal, but the vassal could in his way claim as much of his lord. It was the clearly recognized duty of the superior under the feudal régime to care for the protection and well-being of his vassals.* They had a right to look to him for such service as a superior could render, while they owed to him homage, and were at his disposal, always within very definite limits, for the fulfilment of his individual will.

Of course the system recognized an enormous power in the holders of land. I say recognized; it did not create it. It found it already established as the strongest thing in society; it simply organized,

* The derivation of lord (*hlaford*) which compounds it of *hláf* (loaf) and *ord*, or some equivalent to *afford*, which would make it mean bread-giver, must no doubt be abandoned. (Wedgwood, Dic. of Engl. Etym.) But still it seems far from clear, though I have hardly a right to offer an opinion on the subject, that *hláf* is not in some way at the root of it. Etymologists hardly seem to make sufficient allowance for what one might call accidental shapes of words.

and in organizing limited while it confirmed it. It established for the landholders in Western Europe a status and an influence which, through the whole Continent, except where the genius of the Revolution has weakened it, and most especially in England, is enormous to this day. The landholders were the absolute masters of society, and their order ruled it. The feudal proprietor on his estate was in theory a sovereign. He exercised sovereign rights, and played the part in his little world which the king in the feudal age tried to play, and afterwards, as the nation rose on the wreck of the feudal order, came to play in his greater world—the State. But the main point of consideration here is, that the landholders were the real centres of authority and influence. Society organized itself around them in those days, precisely because they were its real cores.

In the original and simple condition of German society, the fundamental social unit was the householder in his home. But after the conquest of the West, in the new and more complex condition which arose, this simple unit became too weak to assure and maintain itself, and a higher social unit emerged, the landowner on his estate, with the homes that were settled upon it,—and this is the basis of the feudal arrangement of society. The rights of the landlord were manifold and strong; cruel too; society is cruel. We have little call to speak bitterly of the feudal despotism, when we see how cruelly capital presses its rights in the starvation wages on which it can get slop-work done, in what we

please ourselves with calling these enlightened and Christian days. But very definite and serious duties were associated with those rights under feudalism—an element which in modern times we miss. It would be a mistake to speak of it as a contract on both sides. Social contracts are myths, or rather they are among those metaphysical abstractions which when treated as entities M. Comte has done good service by exploding. The thing most like a social contract in modern history was the covenant into which the Pilgrim Fathers entered with each other when they landed on the shores of the new world:—

“ In the name of God, amen; we, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign King James, having undertaken for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and honour of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and of one another, covenant and combine ourselves together, into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most convenient for the general good of the colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.”
—Bancroft, *United States*, vol. i., p. 334.

But here even it is noteworthy that the covenant was no novel contract, but rather an express recognition of relations already consciously sus-

tained, and rooted in an ancient order of society. But if there was no contract in feudalism, the covenants of the relationship were expressed with remarkable clearness; the provisions were most explicit, and they gave to the humblest vassal a standing-ground of individual independence, which exercised a very important influence on the development of the sentiment of liberty, and on the *morale* of society. It was distinctly aristocratic. But, as we have said, it found aristocracy the powerful fact in Christendom, and likely to be permanent through ages. Developed at first by the settlement of the barbarian conquerors on the soil of the empire, it became there the necessary form of society. But even in Germany, where there are no such facts of conquest to take into account, the original aristocratic element in the German commonwealth grew rapidly into a settled social institution, through the exigencies of a martial and stormy time. Granted the necessary predominance of the aristocratic principle in the age of conquest and rough-handed violence, when all central authority had fallen into collapse, and each isolated proprietor on his estate had no one, after the dissolution of the Carolingian empire, to control or overshadow him, then I think we shall see that feudalism introduced a law and a system of relations which was not without noble Christian elements. It made men's duties very clearly co-extensive with their rights, and bound the various classes together, while it maintained the rigidity of their class divisions, in the bands of a mutual dependence and ministry, out of which, in time, a very

high development of individual life was likely to proceed.

And the promise was fulfilled. Whatever judgment we may pass on feudalism, there can be no question, we imagine, that it did produce a succession of some of the very noblest men and women who have ever played their part on the theatre of history. Let us look at one simple instance of the right of free judgment and action which feudal custom reserved to vassals. It will show better than much elaborate description what elements there were within that system for the culture of the individual life. It is quoted by M. Guizot from the "*Etablissement de Saint Louis*":—

"If the seigneur say to his liege man, 'Come with me, for I am going to make war against my seigneur the king, who has refused me the judgment of his court,' the man must reply in this manner to his seigneur, 'Sir, I will go to know, from my lord the king, whether it is as you tell me.' Then he shall come to the seigneur the king, and say to him, 'Sir, Messire says that you have refused him the judgment of your court, and therefore I am come to you to know the truth, for Messire has summoned me to go to war against you.' And if the seigneur the king says to him that he will not give judgment in his court, the man must go forthwith to his seigneur and aid him at his expense; and if he do not go to him, he would lose his fee by right. And if the chief seigneur reply, 'I will readily do justice to your seigneur in my court,' the man must go to his

seigneur and say, 'Sir, my chief seigneur has told me that he will willingly do you right in his court.' And if the seigneur says, 'I will not enter his court, but do thou come with me as I have summoned thee to do;' then the man may say, 'I will not come;' for the which refusal he shall not of right lose his fee, nor anything else."—Guizot, *Hist. of Civilisation in France*, Lecture XI.

There is some education here surely for the higher political life. But the essentially noble element of the system was the personal obligations which it imposed on the possessors of land under the pain of forfeiture, which contrast strongly with that entire independence within the wide limits of the law, which, now that feudal service is abolished, the modern proprietor enjoys. I just note this in passing; in the sequel I shall dwell on it more at length.

The weakness of the system lay in its narrowness, its rigidity, its formality, its utter want of elasticity to the outward pressure of a growing society; and in the absence of any sufficient guarantee of the limited rights and liberties which it allowed. It tended to maintain the form of society unbroken, but unenlarged. There was no room in it for the inevitable progress of the world. It forbade the adventurous spirit in a social sense, and put it under a ban. It kept classes separate with a thoroughness which would have been admirable, if it had been a Divine regulation that nobles should rule, vassals should obey, craftsmen should toil, and peasants should slave, while time endured. But the Divine regulation being quite other than

this, men being meant to live as brethren, the world outgrew feudalism in time. The adventurous spirit who broke the bounds, and aspired to a sphere other than that in which it was supposed that God had set him under the feudal system, became a social pariah ; every hand was against him to strike him down. But this adventurous spirit is perhaps the strongest thing in humanity. We may well believe that He who made man continually by His Spirit stirs and kindles it in human hearts. It is the mainspring of the progress of the world. And that which was fatal to feudalism was the growth of the adventurous spirit in the individual units of the society—the desire to be something other than that which was ordained by the feudal law.

The two chief mundane stimulants of this growth were commerce and war. A free career was always open to talent in the Church, and this was one of the main safety valves of feudalism, through the most rigid ages of its history ; but it was simply a safety valve, no more, through the relation of the Church to feudal society. Among the warlike enterprises which during those ages acted as the strongest stimulants to the development of a spirit of intelligent independence in the higher ranks of the people, the foremost place is occupied by the Crusades. The mixture of classes in a common voluntary and sacred enterprise had a very powerful influence, in concert with other features of those great expeditions, on which space will not allow me to dwell, on the interior relations of feudal society, and prepared the way for its overthrow. War,

commerce, and, as society progressed, discovery and colonization, broke up the system in two ways: by opening independent careers to adventurous spirits, and by favouring, as they did in modes which I cannot stop to specify, the growth of the monarchical power, by which the aristocratic class was gradually humbled to the second rank in the conduct of political affairs. But social influences, and even institutions, abide through the most decisive of political changes. Condorcet remarks that "Men preserve the prejudices of their childhood, their country, and their age, long after they have recognized all the truths necessary to destroy them." It is wonderful how much of the feudal sentiment and habit of life survives among us still.

We must remember that feudalism has grown with European civilisation from its very infancy. As soon as the ancestors of the western nations were settled in their new homes, the forms of it appear. Its roots, as we have seen, lie deep in the original constitution of Germanic society, and it ruled absolutely in Europe during all the stormy formative ages of its history. We may say that modern society was nursed on feudalism; and that which is ingrained in childhood it is hard to expel. Until quite recently—indeed, until that tremendous expansion of the commercial activity of the community consequent on the Free Trade measures of 1846—our modes of thought and speech, our habits of action, our forms of procedure in things social and political, were still feudal. During the last session a bill was passed which for the first time enabled a man to

buy a bit of land in Scotland, without going through the ghost of a process which made him the vassal of the man who owned it. The legal abolition of feudalism in Scotland is only just complete.

At the great Revolution the system throughout Europe really received its death wound. It had long been abolished as the ruling principle by the growth of monarchy, and the rise of the middle class in the towns to power; but it survived as regulating to a large extent the relations of classes, and maintaining an almost impassable gulf between the noble and every other order of society. Against this the people rose *en masse*, and asserted principles the direct opposite of the feudal, which have won their way to the front rank, and have now committed to them the organization and development of the immediate future of the whole civilised world. That this was the *motif* of the great Revolution, no student of its history can question. In France it ground the feudal institutions to powder. The work of society since has been to clear away the wreck.

How much there is still uncleared would seem incredible, after the clearance which has been made, if we did not remind ourselves how slowly that which decayeth and waxeth old in society vanishes away. “*La carrière ouverte aux talens*” was, according to Mr. Carlyle, the gospel of the Revolution, and of Napoleon, its chief priest. France accepted the gospel at once, and thoroughly; England slowly and partially. The *Code Napoléon* made short work of the relics of feudalism. It over-leaped the feudal ages, and sought anew a Latin

inspiration from Rome. In France the feudal order was thoroughly destroyed. Men hated it there with an intensity of which happily we have no measure in England. Here it was largely mitigated by the powerful influence of that great middle class which the Norman Conquest bequeathed to us among its benignest legacies, and which has always formed a most valuable *nexus* between the different orders and interests of society. France had no such *nexus*. Peasant hated noble and priest in France, as men hated their fellow-men nowhere else in the world. When the shock came, the destruction of the ancient order of things was ruthless. Whether France has in a large sense gained by it, is one of the most complicated problems of modern history ; but at any rate the career is open to the talents, and a man is more free to make himself a power there, just on the ground of the force that is in him, than in any other nation of Europe. Whether the coming to the front of all the talents is the thing which builds up states, and saves society, those may be able to tell us who have watched the progress of France since the Revolution, and are watching it now.

In England we had no such shattering shock as the Revolution ; and the old order has succumbed slowly and with difficulty, sapped rather than overthrown by the new spirit which the Revolution set loose through the world. But in England even it is disappearing, though it dies hard. Our ideas of primogeniture, our distinction of realty and personalty, the principle of our game laws, our

exaggerated respect for the rights of landlords, and the right which they claim to influence the votes of their tenants, our peerage, our House of Lords as the highest court of appeal, our system of officering the army, and the form of our Established Church, are the legacies of feudalism which, for good or for evil, remain with us still. Very deeply are most of them rooted in the sentiment of the people, while they are as strongly condemned by the reason of the economists. But each one of these institutions at this moment is tottering. We too are engaged, after our fashion, in fundamental reconstruction. The two most characteristic and most sacred of the feudal institutions, the rights of the landlord and the Established Church, have already been assailed successfully, in that part of our empire where the condition of society, as in France eighty years ago, has compelled a thorough and searching reform. No one imagines that the English land tenure and the English Establishment of Religion can long hold out against the reforming hand. I dare say that I may seem to many to speak ignorantly in speaking in the same breath of the rights of landlords and the Established Church as feudal institutions. I shall explain what I mean when I come to treat of the Ecclesiastical Revolution in the next chapter.

The strong point of the feudal system was the very definite order which it established in society. It put men in their places—whether their right places or their wrong places we may be disposed to question. But the question was not very widely entertained in

those days. It was taken for granted, the rights of man being an unknown term, that as God had made them male and female, so he had made them noble, priest, vassal, merchant, craftsman, and serf. Men were on the whole fairly persuaded that it was a Divine order; that so God had chosen to organize human society, and that so it would continue to be organized, each order keeping its rank, till the end of time. And there was a certain comfortable sense of rest in this conviction. Men knew their places in the social system, and knew their work. The relations of the classes to each other were clearly defined, and every man was kept tolerably in what was felt to be his proper place. And it is an immense relief to a mind anxious about duty, to know exactly how to treat and on what terms to deal with men. When you know a man's status, what his position gives him a right to expect, and what will satisfy the judgment of society, there is something to rest upon. It is not the highest mode of conducting your relations with men, but it is not the lowest. We read of a higher method in the Gospel. Give every man his due, read in the light of the Gospel, means very much. Read in the light of social comity, it still means much; it means an honest consideration of his just claims. But then you must know his just claims; and where society has so organized itself that the position and claims of every class are accurately laid down, so that a man's due can at once be discovered, it greatly simplifies life, and reduces social observances to the regularity of a ceremonial law.

A certain style of dress, manners, mode of living, and observance was recognized as becoming in the various classes ; and a man born in a class accepted at once, as a rule, its traditions and manners, expecting to remain a member of it, and to do the work appointed to it, to the end of his days. But we find now that all this has vanished. The social sorrow of our times is that men do not know their places ; no man knows surely either his neighbour's or his own. There is no sort of fixity in any of the institutions of society, no sort of continence in any of its orders. No order keeps to itself ; they all interlock and interpenetrate. All things are in constant flux ; and above all things the habits, pursuits, callings, and social status of men. We do not know where to find men, and large classes do not know where to find themselves. There are no broad platforms on which men stand together with those of the same rank and calling. Each stands on his own foundation, as it were, while the habit of the old feudal classification is upon us still. Who can tell in addressing his neighbour whether he is to call him esquire or no ? Fifty years ago there was no doubt about it—the law of the matter was perfectly understood. Now every man, every class, tries to make a law for itself. This is a trivial point, but it is significant of far deeper ones. There is a complete break-up and mixture of social orders ; of which the apparition of a real handicraftsman in St. Stephen's would be a significant, yet by no means the most significant index. In the aristocratic sphere we have the sons of our leading nobles entering

houses of business, honestly to learn the trade, while merchants, simply because of their wealth and commercial influence, pass into the assembly of the Peers.

It is evident that an old order of things is breaking up into fragments ; and men watch it, as they watch all wrecks, fearfully. There is a sense of repose in a settled order, in fixed relations, duties, and appointed work. And now nothing is fixed, nothing is appointed ; there is no power to appoint anywhere. There is no judge in Israel, and every man does that which is right in his own eyes. And this state of things, in which the elements of an old order are, as it were, held in solution, before beginning to crystallize afresh, fills the majority of men with distress and apprehension. The old landmarks, the old habits, are a kind of social Bible to them. When these vanish, it is as though a guiding light, a supporting hand, were taken out of the world. It is like a *stampede*, a *sauve qui peut* panic in a battlefield. Every one is struggling in sheer hard strength to get his head above his fellows, and to make himself a position, reckless of the weaker ones whom he jostles and tramples down.

And men have in them a deep instinct of social order. There is a notion in their minds that there ought to be a certain power in society, certain traditions and habits, to rule over the selfish and struggling passions of men ; certain classes with definite rights and duties, and certain recognized relations of classes, maintaining something like order and continuity in the life of the community. They think

that it ought not to be a mere question of personal will and force what a man is and what a man does. This "Every man for himself" seems to the weak and gentle a terrible principle to be let loose in the world to have its full swing. It seems like the establishment of a régime of universal selfishness ; and the right head of such a system seems to them to be described in the supplement, "The devil for us all." Certainly we can find no room for it under the system set forth in the proclamation, "A bruised reed he will not break, and smoking flax he will not quench ; but will bring forth judgment unto truth." But men ask themselves anxiously, Is there anything of a loftier kind at work in the midst of our seething, struggling society ? Is it anything but the mere brute force or brain force which a man can bring to bear on life, which settles his place in the social order ? And is not the same principle settling the nature of the order itself which is to replace the completely organized and balanced system which has held society together in Europe for well-nigh one thousand years ? There is a question beneath this which men are beginning to ask themselves earnestly, and which travellers like Mr. Wallace force upon us, In what respect is this higher, save in polish, than the organization of the most utterly savage society ?

And the question is the more significant, the more serious, in that it is the commercial principle mainly that has destroyed the feudal. The development of commerce, drawing men off from the land which is the basis of the feudal settlement, and

opening new and independent careers to talent, has been the main instrument in the dissolution of the feudal *nexus* of society, without at present giving us anything as substantial in its room. It is worth our while to look at the rate of the progress of commercial and kindred pursuits in England, as compared with the tillage of the land, in successive ages. It will reveal the power which has been sapping the very foundations of the order of mediæval society.

A.D.	Agricultural Population.	Non-Agricultural.	Total.*
1086	1½ millions.	½ million.	2 millions.
1348	3 "	1 "	4 "
1377	1½ "	½ "	2 "
1800	4 "	4 "	8 "
1851	5 "	12 "	17 "
1865	5 "	15 "	20 "

These figures tell their own tale. No system of society based on the possession and culture of land could stand against this tremendous increase in the classes of the population who have no relation to the land, but live by other and independent pursuits. And these classes become the monied classes. They have the talent, the energy, and the resources of the country with them. They utterly overshadow the feudal classes and relations, and even the mock

* I take these figures from a table given by Mr. Seebohm, in some very able papers on the Land Question, in the *Fortnightly Review* at the beginning of this year. The earlier figures are of course disputable. The awful mortality from the Black Death in 1348-9 seems incredible. But Mr. Seebohm's calculations are capable of being sustained. Readers of the *Review* will remember former discussions on the subject.

feudalism, to borrow a happy expression of Mr. Seebohm, on which we have so long been living, they are rapidly destroying and clearing out of the way.

Twenty-five years ago, when the Free Trade controversy was filling England with commercial agitation, the question in many thoughtful minds was whether commerce itself would not take the place of the feudal system as the principle of a new order, and the spring of a new development of society. The idea dawned on many able and influential minds, that surely the bonds of interest woven by this new power, and strengthened by the constant interchange of commodities which become in time almost necessities of life, will supply the place of those bonds of relationship which have held society together for ages, but which have now fallen visibly into decay. Will not men in future settle into the relations which their mutual interests as employers and employed indicate as desirable? and will not those bonds of interest be strong enough to hold in check the disruptive force of the passions of mankind? Will not need of each other's productions confederate nations, on a basis so firm that it will control all the disturbing elements which the ambition or the folly of kings and statesmen introduce into international politics, and finally eliminate these elements from the problem altogether? Is there not a new order rising, a new band of chiefs—the chiefs of industry, and a new band of vassals—the operatives who execute their behests? Is not society arranging itself anew around this centre, or rather along the line of this force; and may we

not hope to see the dreams of universal goodwill, universal co-operation, and universal peace fulfilled at last ?

Twenty-five years ago these and kindred thoughts were working in many earnest hearts. The fairy palace of 1851 seemed to be the enchanted vestibule to this Utopia. No man, I imagine, is dreaming the dream now. The world is sadder than it was then, richer in experience, but for the time poorer in hope. As matter of fact, during these twenty-five years, the growth of a commercial civilisation has widened the breaches and embittered the jealousies and enmities of society. So far from a new order springing up under the ægis of commerce, the world has seen, sadly enough, deepening disorder ; stern struggle and fierce hatred of classes ; gigantic armaments, tremendous wars, and universal distrust. The knowledge and intercourse which have attended the progress of our commerce, by means of cheap papers, cheap postage, railways, and telegraphs, have stimulated rather than allayed the internal discords and miseries of the great European nations. Nationality is rising everywhere as a principle of disruption, and our dread Irish "common woe" repeats itself in nearly every European state.

Things are not beginning to settle themselves into a new order either at home or abroad. The principle of interest of which commerce is the exponent has wholly failed to reconstruct society. Things are in wilder, madder flux than ever ; and the conviction grows stronger day by day, in the most

thoughtful minds, that more tremendous changes are impending than any which the world has known for perhaps the last thousand years. The influence of this new commercial element on our civilisation, has so far been distinctly disorganizing. Far from confederating man more closely, and mitigating the gigantic evils of civilised society, it has made rich men richer, and, while it has without question elevated the social condition of a great body of the working class, it seems to have depressed in an equal measure another great body, and to have multiplied the number of the abjectly poor. It has developed enormous, egregious wealth in landowners and capitalists, while it has failed to solve the miserable pauper problem, and to diffuse a correspondent comfort and sufficiency among the great mass of the poor. It has created rich quarters and poor quarters in our great towns ; and this is one of its saddest achievements. It has left the majority of our peasantry in a condition which would almost compare unfavourably with that of the very saddest of the feudal ages. It has distinctly deepened our social complications, instead of disentangling them ; and men, far from feeling that there is a power at work in the industrial sphere which is silently but surely reorganizing society, are looking earnestly in another direction for the help which humanity needs.

No thoughtful observer of the social movement of the last few years can be blind to the tremendous strides with which the principle of democracy has advanced towards the direction of affairs. It is

palpably the advancing power. Moreover, it professes to be a principle of social order, to be able to establish a natural and therefore a permanent arrangement of society. It says that it is able to deal with those chronic maladies of society, class warfare, religious strife, and pauperism,* which other systems have been tempted to abandon in despair; and it proclaims loudly its power to realize the dreams of a perfect social state, which have floated before the vision of prophets and poets in all ages of the world, and have kept hope alive in sad human hearts. This it professes. It professed this when it sounded the tocsin of the first French Revolution, which brought democracy fairly on to the stage as an organizing power in society. We shall hear its promises again in the Revolution which is progressing now. It has hitherto miserably failed to fulfil its promise; it gave man instead a terrible Saturnalia of lust, blasphemy, and blood. The world has since shuddered at the name. After the great revolutionary war, the ruling and wealthy classes of society combined to bind the demon of democracy, as they called it, and to keep it down. It is loose again now, and men are getting accustomed to it. It professes, and no doubt justly as well as honestly, to have learned wisdom. It forswears violence, and looks to the triumph of truth

* It is noteworthy that the only commercial or rather industrial experiments which seem to put us on the track of a new order, which embody a new principle, and inspire men with a new hope, giving them the mastery of their vices, and teaching them thrift and providence, are democratic in principle. The agricultural experiment at Great Assington, and the co-operative movement in the Yorkshire coalfields, open a new vision of hope for the future of our working men.

in the free judgment of mankind to accomplish its work.

But when we speak of democracy as a principle of social order, we must dismiss from our minds the smooth democratic formulæ which we have admitted into our popular political philosophy. We have some mild ideas current among us, as that Every man who is taxed has a right to be represented in the assembly by which the taxation is imposed; or, The working classes have a right to a fair share in the government of the country. Some, by no means extreme Radicals, have got as far as manhood suffrage, and hold that every adult male citizen has a right to a vote. But let us understand that all this is but child's play to the democracy with which we shall soon have to deal. It reaches deep down to the very roots of society. Very ugly, very ghastly, its form may seem to some of us; but we may as well look it in the face, and grow familiar with it; we shall know it well enough before we have done. The democracy which is silently winning its way in Europe will have a death-grapple some day with what we hold to be the most sacred and permanent institutions of society.

It had its birth into the world of politics at the great Revolution. It had been born in the brains of thinkers, and nursed to some form and shape during the half century which preceded. It proceeds on a principle which is the direct opposite of that on which the feudal order was based. It would take feudalism and place it simply upside-down. The feudal order arranged itself around the feudal lord.

He was the sun to the satellite classes of society. The democratic order arranges itself around the sovereign people. The great mass of the people is the sun of the democratic universe. The supreme question is their good. It asserts that property is a privilege conferred by the society, and that its employment may be lawfully subjected to the regulations of the society for the good of the whole. The absolute ownership of the land, which the commercial principle has substituted for the feudal tenures which limited to a very decided degree proprietary rights, democracy can find no room for. And there is something, (let me say who am no democrat, but am simply doing my best to put fairly the democratic view,) in the present absolute ownership of vast estates equal almost to provinces, whereby the welfare of a great class of our fellow-citizens is placed under the hand of a master who is next to irresponsible, which, to say the least, makes thoughtful men very serious when they consider it.

Under the feudal régime, one of our great land-holding peers would have been under very definite and even burdensome obligations with regard to his land, and would have been subject to a suzerain who would have had claims to judge between him and his vassals. Now he is absolute lord. Within the limits of the law, which are very wide ones, and deal with land very tenderly, he can do what he will with his own; his own being, not like any other property a thing which he or his ancestors have created, and with which he has chiefly to do, but the theatre of the life and activity, the source of the food, the

pleasure, and the domestic welfare of a great multitude of his fellow-men. It is possible for a great lord to turn the fairest spots on this English land, the mere sight of which would be a source of pure delight to multitudes, into a game preserve for his own amusement. The Richmond Hill of a midland county, a hill commanding a glorious view, and which has long been the favourite place of resort to the working folks of a great manufacturing town close at hand, has recently been thus purchased by a great magnate, and the people are shut out. The flagrant instance of Arran, on the Clyde, is well known to all who take an interest in the subject. Many a large town stands on land owned entirely by some great lord; and how constantly it happens that embarrassment through gambling or dissipation is the occasion of concessions which nothing else could wring from him, and which are the conditions of the prosperity and progress of a vast population!

Rights of property! will be the answer; it is very unfortunate, but while society is organized as it is, there is no help for it! But what it greatly behoves us to understand is that democracy does not see that there is no help for it. The poor people ask themselves, On what do these rights of property rest? Trace them back, they say, and in nine cases out of ten you will find that they grew out of fraud, rapine, or a great crime. How much of the land of the country was wrested from the Church, which was the poor man's trustee, not for the community, but for the favourites of the monarch, whose heirs make the poor man's life and lot on the

land bitter to bear? Can a country have a benediction on it which is full of lay vicars and rectors, who are consuming, many of them on their lusts, the property which was devised for the service of God and of the poor? And men ask themselves, Are there no rights of the people in the land which God made for all, and without power to move about on which freely, man cannot, in any true sense, live at all? Democracy answers, that the rights of the community are absolute. None but the extreme Reds would propose measures of universal confiscation; but the democratic party is resolved to get its hand upon the land, and to lay it down as a basis of social order, not that property has its duties as well as its rights, as we mildly phrase it, but that the community shall see that property fulfils its duties, and that the proprietor shall understand that property is held at the discretion of the community, and subject in its administration to the supreme law, the public good. We may call this communism, socialism, or what we will. But those are the wisest who do not call it names, but look it fairly in the face, and ask it frankly what it means; who study it earnestly from its own point of view; for we must meet it fairly, and come to terms with it, or it will grind us to powder before many years have passed over the world.

A second principle of the democratic order is the Republic. It holds, and justly, that monarchy is the key-stone of the fabric of a society which recognizes privileged classes, and maintains their privileges, as an essential condition of a well-com-

posed and well-ordered State. The monarchical principle looks upon society as fashioned upon the model of the human form—the golden head; the superior organs and limbs, representing the privileged classes; the inferior, the great, toiling, suffering mass of the poor. Democracy does not believe in this hierarchy. It holds the absolute equality of men in rights and privileges before God and before each other; it believes that society ought to redress the inequalities and disadvantages which accident of birth may inflict on men; and it demands the Republic as the one means of bringing the mind of the great body of the people to bear on the conduct of affairs. To the very natural objection, Where is the wisdom and experience which might qualify the masses to govern? Democracy answers, Give us room, and you will see. It declares that there is an immense rich mine of human faculty in the people which has never been worked, and of whose wealth we have not the faintest idea. It is the belief of the party that government is a far simpler matter than professional statesmen allow us to imagine, and that what it supremely needs is the clear common sense, the integrity, the courage, the energy, which the democratic inspiration would at once supply.

Nor, let us understand, is the anti-monarchic feeling confined to the politicians who claim to represent the advanced working-class views. Some of the ablest young men at the Universities, not the aristocratic radicals who are always found among the “genial youth” at the seats of learning, but quiet, sober, thoughtful men—men who are leaving

their mark on the scholarship of the Universities, and are certain to leave an equally deep mark on the public life of our times, have come to think that things have fallen into a deep rut of luxury, dulness, and sloth, and that some violent shock is needed for their extrication. There is a feeling abroad that monarchy has ceased to have any real power in England, and has become the mere ornamental figure-head of the State. It is questioned whether such a state of things, however finely we may talk about its beauty and usefulness, is not essentially vicious, leading to idle, luxurious, and wanton living, and cumbering the ground in a very serious way.

Without accepting the views of our "genial youth," we may say that there is that in the public mind which leads it to question the wisdom of maintaining costly institutions which do not very visibly work for the good of society. For myself, I believe firmly in the good of our monarchical system. Yet it is impossible to shut one's eyes to the evil which has arisen from the most unhappy seclusion of the Queen from the public life of the nation. We honour her virtues and respect her sorrows so profoundly, that her influence in the country will bear any amount of strain from this sad source. But let us thank God that through all these stormy and revolutionary times we have had a virtuous and honoured woman upon the throne. In the present state of public feeling a profligate sovereign would have shaken the stability of the throne to its very foundations, even here in England, where it stands

more securely than in any other country in the world. It may seem idle work, talking of Republican doctrines as serious in these days; the possibility of their adoption seems so far away. But it appears to me that in nothing do we make a more serious mistake than in our estimate of the rate at which we are advancing. How far off did disestablishment and disendowment seem five years ago?

The third point of the social order on which the Republicans feel themselves strong is their power to deal with the question of the poor—that chronic difficulty and misery of the world. They think that they, and they alone, can grapple with this gigantic evil. By allowing the freest trade in land, by securing the redistribution of property in each generation, by laying the main burdens of the State on property, and not on industry, and by providing work, State-work, for the unemployed, they believe that they could make pauperism synonymous with vice and idleness. “Mere fallacies” is the political economist’s criticism on their ideas. Probably so; but we must bear in mind that there is a very powerful and advancing class in Europe which is bent on putting these fallacies to a practical test, and that there is very much to be said for them which bears a strong colour of truth to undisciplined and enthusiastic minds.

My own conviction is very strong, that if we could at this moment clear the stage for the democrats, let them establish their Republic, and work out their social theories, the fair promise which it would wear for a time would again, as of old, be blasted utterly

by the passions and vices of men. We should but have an old tale over again, and end in complete and desperate wreck. But my conviction is as clear on the other side, that if the propertied classes meet these ideas with stern contempt, and these claims with blank denial, the party which urges them is advancing so rapidly in power, and in consciousness of power, that it will grind them to powder. The only wisdom is to look it fairly in the face, to try to understand it as a friend tries to understand a friend, to see how men come to entertain such convictions, and what dreamy, beautiful, yea, even heavenly visions sustain them through the struggle to establish them in the world. Thus, and thus only, can we escape revolution; thus, and thus only, can the social order of the future be peacefully developed. It is a happy feature of our English society that the classes always come to understand each other before the case grows desperate. And at this moment we have a double security in the large number of able men in the foremost ranks of the political and the literary life of our times, who are earnestly bent on understanding the working classes, and meeting in no grudging or fearful spirit their just claims.

Christianity when it came into the world brought with it all these ideas on which we have been dwelling, and more than we dream of yet. It sought the emancipation of the slave, it sought the elevation, the salvation of the poor. But instead of aiming at an immediate and immature fulfilment of its hope, by means of a new arrangement of society, proclaiming absolute and unconditional emancipation, and

opening public workshops and public relieving offices in every city of the empire, it sought its end through the rearrangement of the thoughts, feelings, and principles of individual human hearts. It is always the Divine method. The best friends of progress are those who study it and try to observe it in their efforts to help and to save mankind. Let us open our hearts cordially to all that is of God in these democratic ideas of equality and fraternity, of the good of the great human family, the help, the salvation of the poor. Let us meet their advocates with frank acceptance, and establish at once a harmony of spirit and purpose. Then we shall be helping to found a social order of the future, which shall have Christianity as its basis, and Christ's hope for humanity as its end. The true Christian statesman is he who, instead of yielding to the popular cry, which is always eager to subvert society from its foundations, that a new order may arise amid the wreck, can so shape, mould, and enlarge existing institutions, which have grown to their present stately maturity by no tricks or violence, but by the toils, the tears, the blood, of a hundred earnest generations, as to assure the great end which will henceforth be the supreme consideration in every political community,—the highest good of the great toiling mass of mankind.

III.

The Ecclesiastical Revolution.

III.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL REVOLUTION.

WE may lay it down as an axiom in the philosophy of Christian history, that every idea which has retained a powerful hold on large sections of the Church through successive ages, has somewhere in the heart of it, though it may be much disguised and maimed, some essential germ of Christian truth. The great ideas which have for ages ruled in the creed and the system of the Church cannot be explained away as the fruit of superstition or the invention of priests. Superstition may have been largely mixed with them, and may even have compounded the whole body of the doctrine; the priest may have handled it with lordly authority, and found in it the great instrument of his sway; but the soul of the doctrine, that which lies nearest to the heart of its power, we may be sure was Christian, and this Christian element must be fully recognized and taken account of by those who would supplant it by a purer truth.

We may be certain, then, that there is very much to be said from a Christian point of view for the

doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration,* which for almost as many centuries as Christianity can count has been a dominant idea in the Church. From almost the apostolic age the great mass of the faithful have in some form or other believed it. The witnesses against it have been few and scattered, lonely voices in the wilderness, albeit distinguished by no small measure of purity and power. The fundamental idea of it, cleared of all the corruption with which superstition has overlaid it, and the subtleties with which theologians have perplexed it, seems to be that original sin—that is, all that condition and relation, whatever it may be, which man has inherited from Adam, all that he brings with him into the world with an evil tincture in it—is absolutely put away and destroyed by the Saviour's redemptive work. By nature, it is held, man stands in Adam, out of harmony with heaven, and the dogma only expresses the broadest and most palpable fact in human history. By the work of Christ, man as man stands in a holy relation to the Father of his spirit, which he himself by his life can alone impair and destroy. Of this, baptism is a sign. The baptized man stands in Christ with all the responsibilities and duties of a disciple

* That is, the positive side of it. The negative side is simply horrible. It is hard to understand how the Augustinian view of the condition of infants, who through accident of birth died unbaptized, could find a place in any creed which recognized the facts and principles of the Gospel. To this I shall recur in the next chapter. But it is to be noted that on this point the language of the creeds and chief Councils is in happy contrast to the language of the theologians. It is when the latter get to their negations that the unchristian element always appears. Christ is Yea.

resting on him, and the prize of the disciple's calling is within reach of his hand. Baptism was administered freely by the early Church, the Church of the apostolic age, apparently to all applicants,—the passage in Acts viii. 37, is now on all sides confessed to be an interpolation,—and it was thus administered because it was simply a sign of something which existed before, and was wholly independent of the sign, something which the “washing of water” could not create, and which the want of it could not destroy; though we can understand how the rite might be of inestimable value, in a heathen country especially, in bringing home the truth to human consciences and hearts.

And here superstition and the art of the priest, not base in its origin, but aiming in a gross, carnal way at the good of men, began its destructive work. Baptism very soon began to be regarded as a creative sacrament, as having virtue in itself to create the new relation to which it simply bore witness; and through this fundamental corruption mainly the whole sacramental idea and form of Christianity established itself, which the priesthood has worked with such tremendous power and to such fearful detriment of all that is vital in the Gospel, from the close of the apostolic age until now. The Church through the Middle Ages baptized with intense eagerness all whom she could bring, willing or unwilling, within reach of her hand. The same zeal for baptism is at the bottom of the troubles of the Jesuit missionaries in heathen lands to this day. We may smile at the super-

stition which attaches such virtue to a few drops of water, and refresh ourselves with St. Paul's "Christ sent me, not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel," in contrast; but we are bound to respect the idea which lies at the heart of it, and which was the inspiration of some of the noblest and most heroic enterprises of the Church for ages—the idea that men everywhere, in all stations and conditions, were to be sealed with the visible sign of their comprehension in the redeemed kingdom of the Lord.

The Gospel which the messengers of the kingdom are bound everywhere to preach is not, Christ is willing, is waiting, to redeem you; but, Christ has redeemed you, and is willing, waiting but your will, to make that redemption effectual to your sanctification and eternal glory and joy. We, and our fellow-men everywhere, are Christ's redeemed. *Christ died for all men.* Rejecting the Redemption is the one sin, the sin of sins, for which men will have to give account at the last great day. Could the Roman Church, or rather, let us say, the Catholic Church,—it only became Roman at the Reformation,—have simply preached this truth, using baptism as a sign full of significance, and have cherished the germs of life which this Gospel had power to quicken, by faithful proclamation of the truth and witness to the love of God, already we might see, instead of waiting and longing to see, the fair image of the kingdom of heaven in the world.

This view of the Redemption which is by Christ

Jesus lies at the foundation of the idea of a National Church. The Mediæval Church held that the great nations of Christendom were Christian as nations. She believed that they had a standing as Christian *in* the Church, and not outside her pale. She claimed baptized persons everywhere as Christians, bound by the Christian law, and destined to give an account as Christians for the use or abuse of Christian privileges and prerogatives before the bar of the Judge of the quick and the dead. She regarded men, not as needing to seek a Redeemer, but as needing to be taught what Redemption meant and involved; not as needing to be called, but rather to be instructed how to make their calling and election sure. That idea was universal and unquestioned, speaking in a broad sense, in the age in which our National Church was born.

We talk familiarly of the alliance of Church and State. There never was anything of the kind, there never will be. There has never been in the history of Christendom such a thing as a Church sharply separated from the political body, capable of allying itself with the State. There never has been a political body sharply separated from the spiritual, capable of allying itself with the Church. Something of the kind might be possible now. Were the Wesleyan Conference, or the Congregational Union of Churches, having a distinct ecclesiastical organization and status of their own, to propose to the Government of the country terms of submission to political control, we might have what would be strictly speaking an alliance of certain

Churches—which would soon, however, reach the vanishing point—with the State. Were the Free Kirk of Scotland to absorb the Establishment there, and then, having its own organization and order complete, to enter into contract with the State for certain service on certain terms, we might have an alliance on something like a national scale. But the thing is morally out of the question, and is not worth a moment's serious thought. Alliance between Church and State, as between two independent contracting powers, never has been, and in a Christian commonwealth, as we have seen, never can be. All who desire to study history in a Catholic spirit had better establish it at once as a fundamental idea in their philosophy, that there was no possibility of anything of the kind, and hardly a possibility of any one dreaming of anything of the kind, in the age in which our National Church was born.

The Reformation, out of which our national establishment of religion grew, was in England simply the nation by its established organs reforming, according to its lights, its religious doctrine, its religious organization, and its religious life. The idea ruled in every leading mind concerned in the movement, that this nation was a Christian nation, and that, severed from Rome, it was capable of forming in its wholeness a National Church. In a large sense, there was no Church in England but the great mass of the English people. In the contracted sense in which the Church stands for what are called spiritual persons, the clerical order,

they but regarded themselves in their wisest moods, and were regarded by others, as the leaders and representatives of the same great body, the English nation in its religious or spiritual aspect. It was one body with a double head, as it were, inasmuch as it had a double character. It was the old duality, the Holy Roman Empire and the Holy Roman Church over again, in both cases tending inevitably and powerfully to unity, to one headship; which in the case of the universal body, Christendom, for reasons into which I cannot here enter, but which are not far to seek, settled itself in the spiritual headship*—the Papacy; while in the national Churches it settled itself as inevitably in the temporal headship—the Crown.

Nothing can be more radically untrue to the reality of things than the notion that at the Reformation there was an independent spiritual body, the Church, which was made captive and enslaved by the temporal power. The Church was the nation; the king was the one head of the nation, and assumed the supremacy as a matter of course, according to the notions of those times, when an independent National Church was organized, in the spiritual as well as in the secular sphere.

We say popularly that Henry the Eighth made himself Pope of the English Church, in place of

* Students of mediæval history will hardly need to be reminded that the Empire rather than the Church, during the earlier Middle Ages, represented to the best minds the visible unity, the kingdom of Christ. Slowly and painfully, as the unwieldy Empire decayed, the sceptre of the kingdom passed decisively to the Roman Church.

the Pope of Rome, dethroned. It is true in a very partial sense. The royal power was tending strongly to despotism in the sixteenth century, after the shattering wars of the fourteenth and fifteenth, in which the power of the great houses perished; and the kind of authority which the monarch assumed in spiritual things was simply set in the same key. But we cannot understand the movements of that age unless we fully recognize that it was acknowledged on all hands that the head of the political body was bound to have the religious interests of his people under his charge. A monarch professing the modern belief that religion was beyond his province, and that his people must take their higher interests under their own charge, without interference, but at the same time without help from their rulers, would have been regarded with something like universal horror. A careless Gallio, would have been the very mildest of the epithets which would have been hurled at him; while he would have felt himself hopelessly out of tune with all the most honest and earnest thought and feeling of his times.

The course of mediæval thought had led men to conceive of the whole community as Christian; needing exhortation, instruction, discipline, but not conversion, in the fundamental sense in which we use the term; and it was the natural, the inevitable conclusion in all men's minds, that when the nation came to reform its religious life, the heads of the nation should take the movement in charge. Of the selfishness, the tyranny, the avarice,

the brutality, which disfigured the English Reformation, and gave us some of the saddest features of our National Church, I will not trust myself to speak. But I do speak with profound respect of the thought which was the inspiring spirit of the movement, that the whole community was a Christian commonwealth, and that it was bound to act by its recognized organs and representatives in the settlement of its religious affairs.

But where was simple, apostolic Christianity the while? some of my readers may be asking. While kings and bishops and parliaments were reforming, with profoundly worldly motives and aims to a sadly large extent, the religious estate of England, where was the simple Gospel principle, that religious life is the fruit of personal faith in the Lord Jesus, and that the spontaneous, voluntary, heaven-directed efforts of loving and believing hearts are the one agency which Christ has established for the spread of His kingdom throughout the world? Well, the apostolic doctrine, the apostolic idea, were just in the wilderness through all those ages, waiting till they could again show themselves in their pureness to the world. A few quiet, earnest, thoughtful souls, growing gradually into earnest, thoughtful, but by no means quiet Churches, nursed these ideas until the time of their resurrection, their reappearance on the busy theatre of life. In the next age they came to the front, undertook in their turn the organization of society, admitted the worldly spirit, and bowed, though more nobly, to worldly necessities; and after perhaps one of the grandest struggles

of which this world has ever been the theatre, were driven forth into the wilderness once more.

But in dealing with this subject, the purity or impurity of the Christian belief and energy of a particular period, it appears to me that a very important consideration is constantly overlooked. A certain state of society, of knowledge, culture, civilisation, seems to be needful, if Christianity in its purest forms is to flourish and bear fruit. There was a fulness of time to be reached before Christianity itself could be sent into the world. That means that in the stormy and ignorant ages which were covered by the Legal Dispensation, there was no hope that the Christian Gospel could have maintained itself uncorrupted, and put forth its whole influence on society. Another, a harder, a more formal method, whose strength lay much in outward ordinances, was seen to be more suitable for the culture of the Church during the ages in which society was in constant stormy commotion. Then, through the strength of the hand of Rome—not the sword only, the hand of Rome in ruling was quite as masterly as her sword in conquering—a period of universal peace and high cultivation was secured. For the first time in history, the earth was at rest; and a common language and literature made possible a free and fruitful intellectual communion among the various nations of the civilised world.

Providence seized, as it were, that era of peace and culture to found and to build up the Christian Church. But then we must remember that this era was a brief one. Three hundred years passed, and

the civilised world began to plunge into what appeared to be profounder ignorance and more utter barbarism than that from which it had emerged. Can we wonder then if Christianity shared, so to speak, in the fall of Christian society; became dogmatic and formal, shrined or rather shrouded itself in ordinances after the manner of the Elder Dispensation in a kindred state of society; and sought mainly by outward and formal methods to mould and direct the development of mankind? At any rate, this is what actually occurred. What we need to consider is, Could it help occurring? Was it not in a measure sadly inevitable that the purest power and influence of Christianity should shroud itself during those dark stormy ages, and wait until advancing culture should again open a field for its work?

We please ourselves sometimes with vague but glowing pictures of the heavenly results which would have accrued to England had Henry or Elizabeth been content to let religion alone, to speak its own word and to do its own work by the spontaneous energy of loving and loyal hearts. The vision is absolutely baseless. There was no possibility in those times of this "letting religion alone"; and for these among other reasons.

1. The reason on which I have dwelt already, the universal conviction of mankind in those days, that it was the most solemn duty of Christian rulers to care to the best of their power for the religious estate of their subjects. We may say that they had no business to meddle with it. They would have

answered, Has a father no business with the religious culture of his children? We are speaking, it must be remembered, of ages in which the idea of the paternal character of kingly government had not quite died out of the world. And for this simple reason—the world had not quite outgrown its childhood; it was not of full age, as it thinks it is now; and it was not fairly emancipated from the parental form of governmental control.

2. Religion was too formidable, too tremendous a power to be let alone by the rulers of the State. In those days the Cosmos of our modern society, if it be a Cosmos, in which the province of religion and the province of secular life are clearly defined both in their distinction and their unity, was far from developed. Religion mixed itself freely with all the interests and activities of the secular sphere. It carried on wars, it organized rebellions, it fomented conspiracies, it amassed treasures, it drew whole provinces under its control. The power which spiritual persons wielded in the then state of human belief was enormous. No wise ruler could for a moment afford to let it alone. The religious energy in those ages was a compressed force, and dangerously explosive; now it is a liberated force, and pervades safely and benignly the whole atmosphere of society. Nor did the power arise out of legislative enactments, but out of the beliefs and the habits of ages; so that it was not possible that mere legislation could at once control it, or cut off its springs.

Henry laid his hand on the dignities and bene-

fices of the Church, and usurped the right of appointment, we say. But we forget, in saying it, that through ages the fiercest struggles which had convulsed Europe had been fought over this very question. The monarchs claimed the right of some effective share in the appointment of the great ecclesiastical dignitaries; and those who read the history of those ages, know perfectly well that monarchs were driven to assert and to maintain those claims, by the tremendous power which the Churchmen were able to bring to bear on political affairs, and the terrible evils with which, if it so pleased them, they could afflict the land. In the great mediæval dispute about investitures, our whole sympathy, as is mostly the case in great controversies, can go neither with Pope nor King. Both freely invoked the name of Christ, but there was something in the principle on either side which was essential to the true progress of society. Something which was above and beyond both of them, and which the sentiment of political justice is slowly establishing, held the whole truth.

But it is in these considerations that we must seek the key to belief in persecution as a lawful instrument of influence, which possessed some of the very mildest and most merciful spirits of those times. Ecclesiastical persecution had its root in the idea that the visible Church was an ark of safety, into which it was good Christian work to compel men by any means; while the persecution of the political ruler, of a woman like Elizabeth, for instance, had to her mind its justification in the

idea that the Church must be made comprehensive of the whole political community, and that schism was but rebellion in disguise. And this idea was nourished by the exceeding easiness with which schism ran into rebellion, and the grievous political disturbances, which *we* can see to have been most healthful, but which rulers naturally thought to be most baneful, into which freedom of religious thought continually plunged the commonwealth. The rulers could not let religion alone, because religionists could not let the rulers alone, but sought at once, and naturally, to possess themselves of the direction of political affairs. It must be said in fairness, however, that while the dynastic question remained unsettled in Elizabeth's days, the Puritans were, as a rule, conspicuously loyal. Nothing can be more truthful or more touching, for instance, than the martyr Penry's profession of loyalty to the crown. And even under her successor, the Pilgrims whom he had "harried out" of the land, began their social covenant in the new world by professing themselves the loyal subjects of King James. When the dynastic question was settled under the Stuarts, the Puritan party became politically troublesome; and under the Independents, who were the backbone of Puritanism, it rose gradually to the direction of political affairs. Elizabeth's instincts about the matter, from her own—that is, from the monarch's point of view—were not far from right.

3. A third reason why it was impossible in those days that the political head of the common-

wealth should let religion alone, to run its own course and to do its own work, lies in the miserable spiritual destitution which such a course would have inevitably entailed. Those who entertain this dream, have not the faintest idea of the condition in which the rural districts of England would have been left, if after the suppression of religious houses, and the overthrow of so much which had been closely associated with the religious habits and culture of the people, the Government had simply held its hand, and left them, as they might safely be left now, to the care of voluntary pastors and evangelists. Had this policy been adopted, we—yes, we, Voluntaries and Independents—should be looking back on the Reformation age and its destitution, with the same kind of indignation with which we should cry out against the Government, if it made no sort of provision for the religious oversight of its soldiers and its sailors, its paupers and the inmates of its prisons, but left these classes to supply themselves with spiritual teaching, or to go without spiritual teaching, at their will.

In the sixteenth century the Government considered that it had just the same kind of relation to and responsibility for the great mass of its ignorant and helpless population—how ignorant and helpless few of us dream—as the Government of this day has for the classes whom it employs or isolates under exceptional conditions, and who, but for its intervention, would be to a large extent without spiritual instruction and care. No Government, with the faintest Christian belief or conception of Christian

duty, could have endured to look on the condition of England, after the great religious revolution, without stirring itself to bear such help as might be in its power ; or if it had endured it, it would have withered under the just execration of mankind.

But this opens to view another side of the question, and brings an entirely new class of considerations on to the stage.

What, after all, could a Government do? How much was fairly within its power?

We must bear in mind that throughout the whole Middle Age the sacramental idea of Christianity reigned. How far this magnifying of ordinances as the great Christian instruments of salvation was connected with, or rather grew out of the ignorance and turbulence of the times, I have already considered. But we can see that it simplifies immensely the organization of a National Church. If the due administration of the sacraments, the decent conduct of public worship, and some fair measure of pastoral supervision of the people, be the main things to be aimed at, if it is conceived that by these means the power of the Word will be brought to bear most effectually on men's hearts and lives, it lies more within the compass of the ability of a Government to take charge of the religious culture of a people, than in times when more spiritual ideas prevail, and when spiritual life is recognized as the one condition of the accomplishment of any kind of spiritual work. Just this the State was able to do. It could make decent provision for the conduct of

public worship, and the due administration of the sacraments ; it could plant men endowed with some sort of power to exercise a good influence on their fellow-men, in the various parishes of the land. This was something ; and to a large extent it was the only thing within reach of the great mass of the people ; though how much voluntary effort it either suppressed or supplanted can never be known ; quite certainly, however, we imagine, not so much as would have supplied in a higher form a tithe of the religious need of the community.

But this is all, we must remember, which a government can do. It can place a person of average* quality, intelligence, and morality, in the various parishes of the country. It can see that he conducts worship in a prescribed form, and duly administers the sacraments. It can secure by subscription, though here we speak more doubtfully, that he shall hold the broad truths of the Christian faith. And it can prevent any very gross moral scandal arising from the moral conduct of its agents—though here, again, the limits of its power are very easily reached. Now it would be very thankless to refuse to recognize the valuable service which, on the whole, through many generations, this institution has rendered to England, most especially in the age succeeding the Reformation,

* I hope that I am not allowing prejudice to influence me in stating that the experience of all Established Churches proves to us that a Government can secure only a very moderate average of intelligence and power for such a service. The history of the parishes of England through all these generations is, on the whole, we fear, a sad one. We need not wonder at the alienation of the poor.

in which it stood between vast provinces and pagan ignorance and demoralization. But, on the other hand, it would be wilful blindness not to see how seriously the institution has stood in the way of far higher work for England, the supply in a far higher form of the people's needs.

This system of Christian teaching and influence was established in full force at the Reformation, and constituted the National Establishment of Religion. But then there was the New Testament, the life of Christ, the Sermon on the Mount, the charge to the apostles, the history of the planting of Christianity, and the apostolic epistles. The ferment of thought, the eager thirst for knowledge which the Reformation generated, led some to read the Bible earnestly, and with a vivid sense of the wonderful character of its records. And some of the most faithful and intelligent of Englishmen read their New Testaments, and felt themselves transported into a new world. These rites and ceremonies, this idolatrous sacrament, these dry printed homilies, these formal printed prayers, these wealthy and powerful ecclesiastical dignitaries, with high-sounding titles and political powers, these cathedral chapters, these rates and tithes, wrung constantly and by law from an unwilling and often a starving people, this patronage whereby a profligate layman might have the right to appoint pastors and teachers of the Church,—all this, when they opened their New Testaments, seemed to belong to another, and not a more beautiful or heavenly world.

Then began the great Puritan movement, which

was born in the very hour of the Reformation, and laid deep down the bases of a further and completer reformation of society, which, after struggling on for three centuries, is in progress still. The secret heart of Puritanism is the Gospel according to St. Paul. Its vital strength lay in the contrast which the Church of the New Testament, as we read of it in the New Testament itself, presents to the Church as by law established in the land. Its animating ideas may best be grasped by reading these verses from St. Paul.

“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel : not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. . . . For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom : but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men : and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called : but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the word to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are : that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption : that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”—1 Cor. i. 17, 21-31.

The Puritan party consisted of men—the few, alas ! but the elect of the nation—who believed that

the preaching of the cross by those whose hearts were fired by love to the Saviour, was the one means ordained by Christ for the spread of His kingdom,* and that the power of the Spirit in believing hearts was the one organizing and ruling principle in the constitution and the government of the Church. It would be a great mistake to suppose that these ideas were present in their fulness to the minds of all the Puritan leaders. Some of them saw but a little way, and confined themselves to protests against the most glaring evils. But, on the other hand, it would be an equally great mistake to deny that this principle, which the Independents boldly developed, was really behind the great Puritan movement, lent to it all its significance, and breathed into it all its power.

Then there arose in England little communities of men, instructed out of the New Testament, and in free communion with the Spirit of Christ, whose view of what a Church was meant to be, and to do, differed very widely from that which was embodied in the Church as by law established. The Puritans, like St. Paul, made more of the preaching of the Gospel and the study of the Divine Word, than of formal ordinances; and instead of the discipline of human authority in spiritual matters, they believed

* Strictly speaking, the inclusive character of Christianity was somewhat restrained even in the most earnest Puritan Churches. All religious communities were too much like entrenched camps in those days, more intent on guarding their own life and their sacred principles from the spoiler, than on bringing the outlying into the fold. Still a very noble missionary spirit burned in the heart of Puritanism, and had a very decided influence on the enterprise of the Pilgrims in colonizing the New World.

in the unction of the Holy Ghost. They grew and multiplied. They became so numerous that there was a visible breach in the spiritual unity of the nation. The nation, regarded as a Church, was becoming two bands. Then the question arose, the critical question in English ecclesiastical politics, Can the Established Church enlarge her borders and purify her life so as to comprehend these men, who are most earnest students of God's Word, and most faithful disciples of Christ and the apostles; or has it no room for them, no belief in them or in their Gospel, but rather hatred, opposition, persecution, and death? How much in the religious future of England, of the world, was hanging on the settlement of that question in the days of Elizabeth and James. Had the Church as by law established accepted and amalgamated the purer life and light which the Puritans brought, we might never have heard in England the word Non-conformity. But it went quite otherwise.

We hear much sometimes of the toleration of the Church of England. I confess to a feeling of strong impatience when I hear and read about it. Three times, in the three great crises of her history, in the sixteenth, the seventeenth, and the eighteenth centuries, the Church of England has deliberately purged herself of her noblest, wisest, and most Christian members. She expelled the Puritans; she expelled the Nonconformists; she expelled (practically) the Methodists. Thrice has she purged out her most vital elements; thrice has she destroyed her fertility, and left herself dying in

wealth, dignity, and ceremony; while the pure, noble, glowing life which would have quickened her passed outside her pale for ever, and organized Churches on the apostolic model which have been the salt and the light of religion in this English land in her room. And I believe that in the very nature of things it was simply inevitable that it should be so. The Scotch National Church has repeated the same suicidal policy, and has expelled the very men whom it should have been most proud to retain—the men who proved by their self-sacrifice that the flame of the Divine life burnt pure and bright on the altar of their hearts.

That organization of Christianity which is possible in a National Church, leaves little room for burning zeal and intense vitality. Its religious activity must, under the very best conditions, be largely a thing of rule, and order, and law. The independent movement of a man like Penry or Cartwright, obeying the inspiration of a higher will, can find but little free play within its pale. As matter of necessity it must look suspiciously on the movement of a vigorous and independent life. It is the natural and apparently the necessary policy of all highly organized and established Churches to expel their most vital elements—and it is their Nemesis. These repeated ejections leave them exhausted of their Divine energy: they waste and perish, while the life which they have cast out grows strong and fruitful, passes into new and independent forms, and creates Churches more harmonious with the Divine idea—Churches which aim at the national establishment

of religion by Christianizing the very heart of the community.

The Puritan party, expelled, thought out these principles, brought them forth into a clear form in Independency, and grew so strong as in 1648 to become the ruling power in the State. For a brief but brilliant period they reigned; then they passed from the front, and, instead of reigning, commenced afresh their true work, the conversion and Christian instruction of the great mass of the people. Under the noble and learned Nonconformist outcasts, and then under the great Evangelical Nonconformist and Methodist preachers of the eighteenth century, these children of the Puritans multiplied in numbers, and increased in power, until they became the chosen and honoured teachers of the people, the leaders in every movement of social, intellectual, and political progress, the vanward soldiers in the battle of our public freedom; and now we stand this day the victors on the field which the unflinching heroism of our fathers won for us and for England; for on this field was fought the battle of the religious and political liberties of our country.

What is the most broad and striking fact in the religious history of England during the last three hundred years? Is it not the remarkable increase, generation by generation, of the number of voluntary, self-devoted, faithful ministers of the Gospel? Generation by generation, age by age, this band has mightily increased; and as the Nonconformist Churches have multiplied, the Establishment, except so far as it has renewed its life from

our fountain, has as steadily declined. It has lost its hold, generation by generation, if it ever had it, on whole classes, and those the most ignorant and neglected classes of the community. Its powers, its privileges, its offices, its revenues, have been limited again and again. Its original idea, that it alone had the right and the power to speak and to work effectually for God in England, has been entirely abandoned; it has been thrown more and more on the voluntary service and support of its members; and at this moment it is able to urge no claim for the smallest advantage over the poorest Nonconformist sect or the purest secularist, in a matter so vital to the best interests of England as the education of the children of the poor. These two movements have been very plainly concurrent, the multiplication of voluntary teachers and churches, and the weakening of the Establishment principle, which has at length grown so weak, that in the judgment of the Primate of All England it has but a few years' lease of life. The two phenomena seem to be very closely connected, almost in the relation of cause and effect. The old shrivelled leafage drops as the young bud of power starts beneath.

There are many influences at work weakening the principle of the National Establishment and endowment of religion. In the first place, it is becoming palpably an anachronism. The organization of the Church is closely in union with the feudal order of society. Episcopacy is one thing, such an Episcopal system as ours in England is

quite another. The Episcopal took its place with the Noble order in the constitution of mediæval society. Very much the same causes which threw the power into the hands of the landed aristocracy, established the lordship of the dignitaries of the Church. The Bishop was an important and powerful member of feudal society. His place was recognized in the national council, and at the Reformation his position and influence were determined, or rather settled themselves naturally, according to the ideas which feudalism handed down. The Anglican Bishop is in many respects the legitimate heir of the dignitary who through the whole mediæval period was a powerful feudal lord. The whole organization of the Church roots itself deeply in the very structure of society; and that in its essential form has continued feudal down to our own times.

We have traced the change which has passed in the constitution of society; we have watched the very wrecks of the feudal order vanishing; it is inevitable that a kindred dissolution should take place in the system of the Church. It belongs really to an old order of things which has passed away. It stands alone in its structure, its habits, its laws, its tribunals, its very speech. The only links which bind it to the present are its ministers, and they are painfully hampered and perplexed by the bonds with which its creeds and offices fetter them. New life in England not seldom clings to antique and even fantastic forms and organs. Perhaps to a clear fresh eye, could one be brought to

bear on our public life, our Established Church system would seem just as out of tune with the living present, as the man in armour in our public shows. Devices are abundant to bring the ministers of the Church into more free and wholesome contact with the realities of the daily life of the community. Among the most notable is the recent recommendation of a Royal Commission that the Athanasian Creed should be retained and used as of old, but on the express understanding that it is not at all to be held to mean what it says. But this trifling tinkering of an ancient and incongruous system has been found useless in things political. A new principle has been recognized, and is quietly reconstructing society from the very foundations. A new and kindred principle, yet old as the Gospel, must have free room to reconstruct the Church.

Again, the established methods are felt to be most cumbrous and costly, and the tendency is to simplicity and economy, not in the use of money only, but in the use of power. The world sees with its lynx eye that there is an immense waste both of energy and wealth in this cumbrous mechanism, and desires for mere economical reasons—and they strike deep and reach far in these days—if it cannot simplify, to abolish it. The economists—and they are the ruling spirits in the political sphere—are against it to a man. And now that the system is at work in clear daylight, and open to the free criticism of the ablest minds, it seems full of fatal faults and flaws. It asserts a doctrinal unity which it has no means of maintaining, and which it gives up all

hope of maintaining. Nothing can be more powerful and convincing than the arguments of the Dean of Westminster against even the effort to maintain it. But it must deny itself in the licence which it allows, and fill those of its ministers who believe in the worth of dogmatic definitions with distress, and even with dismay. It pretends to exercise a discipline which it has not the faintest means of enforcing; the enforcement of which, moreover, would be resolutely resisted by all but the extremest sections of the community. And yet the whole system of the Church presupposes the power to exercise such a discipline, and the absence of it makes its regulations futile, and the language of its formularies a mockery. It establishes a monarchical rule which has no power to sustain its authority, and is destitute of all real control; indeed it seems at last to be brought to the conviction that the safest thing which it can do is to let disorder alone. We hear a good deal of the virtue of episcopal authority, the help which it offers to the clergy on the one hand, and the disorder which it prevents on the other. As far as our observation and reading enable us to judge, the office is most magnified by those lax theologians and ecclesiastical politicians who deprecate any interference with anything; while those who have strong ideas about ecclesiastical order, and who believe in the strong hand in spiritual rule, speak of the Episcopate, in the condition to which it has at present fallen, with something like contempt. Perhaps the best test of its worth would be furnished by the

answer to the question, Is there any wise man or influential party of men in England who would desire to see the authority of the Episcopate extended, that it might become a true monarchic power in the Church? Do the wisest of the bishops themselves desire it? The debate in the House of Lords on Lord Lyttelton's bill for the increase of the Episcopate, was to my mind profoundly significant. The wisest men of all parties, including the Right Reverend Bench, seemed to hold aloof from the measure; as far at least as any hearty tone of confidence and hope was concerned. There seemed to be something in the speeches, as there was in the Emperor Napoleon's proclamations, which betrayed little heart and little hope, and was prophetic of coming disasters. Few things in the Church of England could seem less attractive to an intelligent Nonconformist, than the kind of service which Most Reverend and Right Reverend Fathers in God seem able to offer in ruling and guiding the flock. For any real vital service, I imagine it is felt on all hands that they are helpless; for ornamental service they are costly, cumbrous, and much in the way.

And those who read their New Testaments see a picture of the Church there to which the worldly, wealthy, creed-bound, disjointed system of the Establishment presents a sorrowful contrast. This apparatus of worldly pomp and dignity seems to them a terrible incubus on the spiritual energy of the Church itself, and a scandal and a shame before the unbelieving world. Men are shrewd enough

to see in these days that the Establishment hinders much and mars much free, voluntary effort, which would else be put forth for the service of the community; and the life, energy, and rapid increase of the Free Churches set men thinking about the right and the worth of this costly and clumsy method of attempting, we can hardly say accomplishing, spiritual work.

All these are reasons, and important reasons, which account for the growing weakness of the principle of Establishment; but none of them furnishes *the* reason, I venture to think, of its decisive doom and approaching overthrow. If this which I have glanced at had been all, the Establishment would still have stood, for the reason which made it stand firmly at first—the need of the people. When the common sense and Christian insight of the people discerns clearly that there is enough free Christian life in England to undertake and accomplish the work at which the Establishment aims, in a purer, more spiritual, and more effectual way, it will fall—and not till then.

It is the growing belief of the intelligent classes that this time has come, which is pressing the question on the attention of the statesman, and making it one of the leading political as well as ecclesiastical topics of the day. The Christian life of the country has grown strong enough to lift and to bear voluntarily the burden which the State has been bearing wearily and painfully for ages. The formal and soulless efforts of the State—for which, Independent as I am and Voluntary to the back-

bone, I can see that there was a reason and a need as long as the alternative was mainly pagan darkness—are becoming quietly superseded, are becoming untimely and inopportune; and as such they will be laid aside, because nobler energies are at work to fulfil their aims. The pale, cold moon which lit the night of ignorance and strife is waning, because the sun of life is flashing on the world.

But then, are we to give up the idea—surely a great Christian idea—of the Christian commonwealth, which, as we have seen, was at the root of the organization of the National Church, and was its inspiring spirit; though its body took shape under the influences of the times, with which feudal ideas and habits had no little to do. It is an idea which has fascinated the imagination of some of the noblest thinkers and writers in England from Hooker to Coleridge, Arnold, and Maurice; and it has a full charm for us. Is it not possible, then, to undo this fatal policy of ejection, and to find room within the National Establishment for all the forms, varieties, and energies of the spiritual life of the community? This is the question which is behind all the schemes of comprehension which form so notable a feature in the ecclesiastical policy of the day. I believe firmly in this Christian commonwealth. Perhaps one great weakness in our Independency is that we do not sufficiently believe in it, and find it difficult to recognize anything as Christian which does not square with our standard measure of

religious life. But it is just because I do believe in it, and desire and pray that I may see its Christian realization, that I am against all such schemes of comprehension, be they wide or narrow ; all endeavours to widen the National Establishment so that it may take varieties of ministries, beliefs, and operations, which are now excluded, within its pale.

It seems to me that it can be but a clumsy and provisional process, to attempt to realize the development and expression of the Christian mind of the community through the forms of law. We leave the intellectual life free to express itself. We live the life of an intellectual people, without attempting to organize it by law, and the savour of the intellectual life pervades the whole action and expression of society. The spiritual will never be raised to its true position and function among us till we take the same view of the ministry which law can offer to it. There seems to be this fatal objection to the comprehensive scheme in any form. Taking the most liberal view possible of the action of a Parliamentary establishment and regulation of our Christianity, allowing that the authorities may be most sincerely anxious to give the widest scope to free individual life, and to interfere as little as possible with the spiritual liberty of the members ; yet its action must inevitably in some sort circumscribe liberty, lower the tone of energy, impose limits on thought and operation, and thereby weaken the most vital element in Christianity.

That which would have to be sacrificed to secure

a visible and formal unity, would be that which is the very inspiration of a high Christian activity, and which it is of the greatest moment to the community to conserve and strengthen, as it is by that alone that the nation can be quickened—can be made Christian to the heart's core, in the nobler and more fruitful sense of which at present we cannot do much more than dream. A visible and formal unity may be gained by comprehension, a certain dignified order in the conduct of services, a certain respectable minimum of talent and character in the ministry, and a certain recognized communion among the fellow-labourers in the field; all this may be gained, whatever it may be worth,—very little in my judgment,—but we must sacrifice to gain it that fine, free, spiritual element in the religious life which has made the chief witnesses for God in all ages, Jewish and Christian, Nonconformist. We must sacrifice the most pungent saltiness of the salt, the actinic power in the light, the most energizing breath of the life which is to purify and save society.

I know well that very noble and generous motives are at work in the hearts of many of the most distinguished advocates of comprehension. They pity us in our disendowed and disestablished estate. They believe that we the Nonconformists lose much by it, and that the country loses much by our loss. They think that if we were brought within the Established pale we should be in a position to accomplish a much larger and more fruitful work. We, on the other hand, believe that if freedom were

allowed to us, if the universities were fully open to our youth, and the weight of State influence and the social pressure which is against us were removed, we could render better, because freer and truer service to the community, than would be possible under the most liberal scheme of comprehension. Time was when the Independents were not the rearmost men in England; and we hold that there is nothing in our principles and nothing in our history which should disqualify us for high service as Independents, in the times of ecclesiastical revolution which are coming on the land. The poverty and weakness are in ourselves. But these the growing earnestness of society, and the inspiring summons of the times, may be expected to cure, even though we be robbed of "the sweetness and light" which we are assured haunt only the Established sphere.

The dread lest the Christianity of the nation should be compromised by disestablishment and disendowment, is a very real one with many pious and active members of the Church. But it should be some consolation to them to remember that the nation which most constantly and publicly recognizes God in connection with all its national experiences—the chastisements, humiliations, and triumphs of its life; the nation in which the Christian ministry receives the most abundant honour, in which a Christian sanctuary is recognized as the first and most essential structure in every settlement in the wilderness; the nation in which Christian communities are most numerous and influential, and

Christian activities most strenuous and successful, is the nation in which there is not, and never has been, an Established Church. The comparison between the United States and England, in all that concerns the visible marks and badges of a Christian people, would be on the whole to our disadvantage. Freedom has secured there results which privilege and endowment have failed to secure here; and simple preachers of the word, Independents too, there exercise an influence on public affairs which is not approached in England, even by the most distinguished bishops of the Established Church.

I am no eulogist of the United States. There is something in their Christian life which contrasts, and to my mind unfavourably, with the tone and temper of ours. And I feel bound in honesty to confess that I attribute no little of the solidity and stability which characterize our religious life as a people, to the influence of the Establishment during the formative ages of our national development. But are we always to be in leading-strings? Is not the time come when, a certain character being firmly ingrained, we can be left free to manifest it spontaneously in all our religious activity, and to work it out to its fair issues? I am no believer in this perpetual childhood of nations. The Establishment has helped to educate us; the time of our free manhood has come.

Believing in freedom as I do, I rejoice to see how freedom is justified of her children. I wish that we Englishmen could trust it more heartily, and leave a free course for the free Spirit in the free Church,

through all the half-paralyzed limbs and organs of the commonwealth, which we have enfeebled by protection, and cramped by swathing-bands of authority too long. I believe that the removal of the incubus, the national Establishment and endowment of religion, would reveal a wealth of vitality latent in the springs of the Church itself, the bursting forth of which in joyous, strenuous, voluntary effort, would be like springtide greenness on her cold and barren breast. Agencies inspired by the one living Spirit, with no other strength or claim than that which He bestows, and which human spirits recognize everywhere, would bear a pure quickening stream of energy through all the veins and arteries of the national life.

The meaning of the word, a Christian nation, would then dawn on us with new beauty and power; and we should be visibly nearer to the time, far enough as yet, when, Christian ideas being embodied in all our institutions, Christian law ruling all our public operations, Christian love organizing our mutual relations and inspiring our mutual ministries, our public life being a perpetual liturgy, our national industry a perpetual hymn, we shall understand at last what heaven means by a National Church.

IV.

THE THEOLOGICAL REVOLUTION.

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A MEETING was held some months ago in London, which on many accounts was not a little remarkable. The object of the meeting was to welcome and to congratulate Baboo Keshub Chunder Sen, a Hindoo preacher of Theism, and reformer of idolatry. But the most noteworthy feature of the meeting was the appearance on the same platform, as sympathetic speakers on a question which was connected at every point with theology, of an eminent dignitary of the Church of England, a distinguished Unitarian minister, a Jewish Rabbi, and the foreign secretary of the London Missionary Society. Of course any social or political question might easily have drawn them to the same platform. But here the interest was mainly, if not entirely, religious. Questions touching the most vital religious beliefs inevitably cropped out at every point. It was a distinct form of religious teaching, "if shape that might be called which shape had none," which Mr. Sen came to represent and to expound. The fact that men of

mark, representing schools so widely opposed as the Churchman, the Independent, the Unitarian, and the Jew, felt themselves able to meet in sympathy on such an occasion, and occupied themselves honestly in discovering their unities rather than their discords, is a sign of the times which is very full of meaning, and, let us believe, very full of hope.

I imagine that no thoughtful observer of the progress of opinion can have failed to note that, during the last generation, ecclesiastical and theological ideas have steadily declined as a basis of fellowship and co-operation, while spiritual ideas have taken their place. Men are increasingly drawn together by that which belongs to the sphere of the sympathies, and those beliefs which mould the life; while they attach less and less importance to merely intellectual agreement with regard to the propositions in which they express their judgment about the forms of truth. The old mediæval conception of unity, the unity of the faith, which stood visibly in assent to dogmas propounded as the Catholic faith by the Catholic Church, and which has lasted far on into the Protestant ages, shows at length that it is wearing out as the basis of the spiritual confederation of men. It is felt now that there may be a true spiritual oneness—oneness of interior conviction, aim, hope, and work—beneath very diverse intellectual conceptions of the deep things of God;*

* I do not know that I have ever met with a more bold and able discussion of the subject than in a volume of sermons just published by the Rev. J. Allanson Picton, M.A., called "New Theories and the Old Faith" (Williams and Norgate). It contains, too, some very

while, on the other hand, there may be much spiritual separation, and even intense repulsion, between those who repeat the same creed, recognize the same teachers, use the same offices of devotion, and belong by profession to the same Church. It is not so very long since a distinguished member of the Church of England said publicly in "the leading journal" of another yet more distinguished member of the same Church,—a man who, perhaps, of all living men has rendered the noblest service to Christianity and his country,—that they did not believe in the same God. Unity of theological belief or confession,—I by no means confound the two, but the principle in a measure holds good of both,—is no sort of guarantee of that central oneness out of which alone true heart-deep fellowship and co-operation can spring.

But I often think that we grievously misrepresent both the mediæval Catholic and the modern Roman Church, in supposing that this was the kind of unity at which they aimed. No doubt their discipline compelled men to adopt the same formularies, to say the same words, and to think the same thoughts in the same forms, under penalty of anathema, and all that it might carry in its train. We sometimes speak scornfully of the kind of unity, for instance, which the Athanasian Creed can make in a Church. It is strange, by the way, that of all Churches the Anglican Church seems to attach most importance to it. What can be the possible

masterly arguments on the leading scientific doctrines of the day in their relation to the truth of the Gospel.

worth of a fellowship, we ask, which rests on the devout and believing repetition of dogmas which the most trained intellect can hardly comprehend, and of words which are used now in senses which the supposed author of the Creed would have anathematized in his day? It is plain that the majority of the clauses must be simply an unknown tongue to the great mass of mankind. In what sense and to what extent can assent to these propositions, or to any sharply defined theological dogmas, associate men? And yet it would seem that this is the kind of unity at which the Roman Church has been aiming for ages—a unity of this order, on this basis: “Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholick Faith. Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholick Faith is this,” etc., etc.

But, as I have already said, I think that in this matter the policy of the Roman Church is imperfectly appreciated by Protestants. We are wrong in supposing that theological agreement is the main thing which Rome recognizes as the ground of unity. And in misjudging Rome, it is beginning to be clearly seen that we Protestants have adopted a very false policy ourselves, in so magnifying doctrinal unity as to place it above yet more powerful and vital things. The real aim of the Roman Church in her insistence on unity of belief, is to be sought in the moral and not in the intellectual sphere. The acceptance of the Creeds is regarded by her mainly as the sign and expression of submission to the

teaching of the Church. She asks men to believe, not so much her Creeds, as herself. She does not profess that men can understand it all, or give an explicit intelligent assent to the forms in which she has set forth the doctrines of the truth. What she really demands is that men shall submit themselves trustfully to her teaching as far as they can follow it, and shall look to her confidently for such further teaching as they may need, as their intelligence becomes developed, and craves fuller light. So that the bond of unity in the Roman Communion is really a moral one—moral trust in and submission to a teacher, to a living organ of utterance and influence. The Pope is really working out the moral idea and aim of his Church through all ages, in making the central Catholic dogma, belief in himself.

It is always a moral bond which Rome is aiming at. She seeks to realize the communion of saints by making men submissive to a paternal authority; brethren because obedient to one Father, and observant of the orders of one home. She makes infinitely more of a submissive filial spirit than of assent to dogmas. Dogmas with her are rather the test of the filial mind. Men easily obtain pardon for aberrations, if they profess themselves willing to accept the guidance of the Church. The Pope by his new dogma is seeking to establish this paternal authority, as the supreme thing, the divine thing, in this lower world. Children, willing to accept implicitly his judgment and guidance about all the concerns of life, he desires to gather round

him. This is his conception of the Kingdom—the happy peaceful household which Christ meant to found when He established the Christian Church. But the main point of importance for us here is the fact that the bond is not intellectual, but moral; not the assent of the mind to theological formularies, but the loving submission of the heart and will to himself. And we err if do not recognize in this one of the strongholds of the Roman position. Misunderstanding the Papal policy, we misunderstand much more. We are blind to one of the strongest sources of Roman influence; and we place ourselves at a grievous disadvantage by following the method which we see, when we come to look into it, that Rome abjures.

Now we Protestants utterly abjure this relation to a man, or to any company or order of men. We deny absolutely that any man, or any company of men, can play thus to their fellow-men the part of God. To us the belief in the infallibility of Pope or Church is simply idolatrous. But rejecting this bond of union, personal submission to a spiritual chief, Papa, or Pope, we are in sore danger of setting up the mere naked forms of the Creeds as the bond of spiritual union in its stead. We have seen that in the Roman Church the rigid demand for doctrinal orthodoxy had really a moral root, that it really meant submission to the mind and the hand of the Church. We Protestants have, in the full sense, no Church to submit to. We talk about “Mother Church,” but it means with us something quite different from, and quite smaller than, that which

it means on Roman lips. We get rid of the person whose absolute authority makes submission to the Creeds a moral rather than an intellectual act; but we keep the Creeds, and are terribly tempted to make intellectual assent to them the basis of the communion of saints and the fellowship of souls. The Creeds have hitherto, to a large extent, taken the place in Protestant Churches of that moral attitude with regard to a living paternal authority, which is the real basis of the unity of Rome. Therefore there is some justice in the Roman complaint of us and of our doctrine, that our faith is an intellectual adhesion to intellectual abstractions, which may easily remain utterly inoperative on the life.

The theoretic Protestant answer to this is simple and decisive. We Protestants declare that with us too faith is a certain moral attitude and action with relation to a person, not the assent of the mind to certain formulæ of truth. We profess that we believe in Christ, and not simply in the doctrines of Christianity. We maintain that nothing on earth in the visible sphere can answer the purpose or fill the place of that living Person. We call no man Father; we call no man Master. What the Romanist tries to find in Pope and Church, we find in Christ alone. This is our Protestant confession. But then to our faithless hearts Christ seems far; and searching His Word that we may know the mind of the Spirit is hard and painful work. We too, like the Romanists, would have truth on easier terms than are involved in spiritual insight; we

should like to have our life nourished on something more palpable and visibly accessible than this unseen awful Presence, and that unction of the Holy One who is to guide us into all truth. And so we frame our doctrinal definitions with elaborate art, and make them the main basis of our spiritual fellowship.* Even a few years ago, departure from the minor matters of the accepted Creed—nay, from the mere jingle of the phraseology, as the present writer has sorrowful reason to remember—was regarded as literally the unpardonable sin in our most evangelical Churches; and to this day, those who consider themselves as the saints *par excellence*, who separate, not from the world, but from other Churches, that they may become The Brethren in a yet closer fellowship, allow themselves to be severed by doctrinal niceties to a degree which would be absurd but for the sin. Because they cannot agree to pronounce together the common Creed to the minutest shibboleth of accentuation, there are sects of them who refuse to sit down together even at the table of the Lord.

Protestantism, as a protest against Romanism, has strength, has life, solely by virtue of the substitution of the living Christ for the living Church and the living Pope. Its besetting temptation is to substitute forms of words for this living Christ, and

* It is remarkable how in the Church of England doctrinal rigidity has developed itself *pari passu* with moral deterioration. It will hardly be questioned that the age of Charles the Second had a feebler hold on the spiritual world than the age of Elizabeth. I need not remind theologians that the conformity which it exacted was far harder and more exclusive.

then it is fairly open to the sneers and the taunts of the Papal Church. A Protestantism which has no discernment of spirits, which finds its main strength in confessions of faith, and judges its life mainly by set forms of experience, may become in the end so dry and dead a thing, as to look ghastly even in the palsied presence of Rome.

But those who have an open eye for the signs of the times take note of a tremendous change, amounting to a revolution, which is passing over our theological ideas and habits of thought. The root of it lies in the wonderful mixture of minds, and modes of thought and of life, which is the characteristic feature of the quarter of a century some outlines of whose development I am trying to trace. What a large suggestion there is in the words, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Many have been running to and fro. Close and fruitful intercourse, through the railway, the steam-boat, the electric telegraph, the penny post, the public meeting, and the cheap press, is the notable feature of our modern civilisation, which in a former chapter I brought more at large under the reader's notice. I endeavoured to show how mightily these forces have helped forward the intellectual revolution. They have been as fruitful in the theological sphere.

We must remember that a generation ago the Churches dwelt apart, each

"In a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground."

Each lived by itself, had its own habits, its own

notions, its own meetings, its own newspapers, and its own magazines. Interchange of kindly offices was far from unknown; but it was carried on, as it were, under a system of passports. Free circulation was forbidden. The intercourse had not then been enfranchised. Men of different communions were something like foreigners to each other, and their meeting and co-operation was not without distance and difficulty. Thus the means of mutual knowledge were, to say the least, exiguous. Now, we have been so mixed and jumbled together by the earnest and stirring controversies of these times, by the criticism of the press, by the opportunity of intercourse and concert afforded, nay, demanded, by the great social interests which occupy so largely the thought of society, that we seem to know all about each other. And just in the proportion in which we come to know each other, and have to converse, to commune, to co-operate, the idea has taken firm possession of men's minds, that in these days a man's theological opinions form a very bad measure indeed of his spiritual life and power—that the creeds, in fact, furnish but one of the elements, and that the weakest, necessary for the determination of what we might call his latitude and longitude in the great system of the spiritual world.

Men find in each other, as we have seen, an essential oneness under the doctrinal diversities, and an essential diversity under the doctrinal oneness, which compels them to believe that the past policy of Protestant Churches in holding so rigidly to their formularies is an essentially false one,—at

least, if unity be the object; and thus they are led to seek a basis of unity and co-operation which shall comprehend spiritual as well as doctrinal elements in its demands.

Let us illustrate the principle by an instance. But for the absorbing interest of the war, and the claim which their country urges both on the French and German theologians, a meeting of the Evangelical Alliance would have been held this autumn in New York. In its idea it was intended to be a kind of representative gathering of Evangelical Christendom. It is interesting to see how the managers of the meeting set about getting the members together. They issue an invitation on the basis of a doctrinal statement. Substantially it comes to this. Those who believe thus and thus are invited to attend and constitute the meeting; those who believe otherwise, or who accept in part only the creed of the Alliance, have no standing in the assembly. The question forces itself upon us, How many men are there who hold most honestly with their minds the Creed of the Church, or the revised form of it which the Evangelical Alliance has promulgated, who uphold most strenuously, and it may be preach most fully, the Evangelical doctrine, but who are thoroughly selfish and worldly hearted? They will go from home from no deep love for the Gospel, or for Christian unity, but mainly for the sake of a pleasant trip and to see the New World; but they will be freely admitted to and welcomed by the Congress, and perhaps be among its most influential members. While, on

the other hand, how much pure, lofty, earnest, glowing Christian life will this doctrinal basis exclude? No discrimination of character is attempted or is possible. It is mainly on the ground of intellectual belief that men constitute themselves representatives of Evangelical Christendom, and take the somewhat portentous title in these days of "The Conference of Christians in New York."

But what, after all, is to be done? If these large congresses are to be held, there must be formal bases capable of clear definition laid down. If we reject the simple doctrinal basis, what is to be posited in its room? It may be that the true answer is, that none of these great representative gatherings of self-called Christians should be held; that there is much in such meetings which is ensnaring to the members, and illusive to the world. Or it may be that this is just one of the great questions which God is pressing very solemnly on the attention of this generation. One of the great discoveries, or rather rediscoveries, which we have to make is the true Christian basis of the spiritual fellowship and co-operation of men. We are feeling after the true answer; but the solution is not ready yet.

Closely connected with this tendency of the times to be dissatisfied with the doctrinal definition and separation of folds, is the final decline and fall of the Augustinian theology. I do not propose to sketch, even in briefest outline, the history and the teaching of the truly wonderful man whose name may fairly be attached to the theology which has reigned in the Church, more or less absolutely, for

the last fourteen hundred years. He is the real father of the dominant school, up to this time, of mediæval and modern theology. He was born A.D. 354, and he died A.D. 430. His writings have wielded an influence on Christian society through all these ages with which St. Paul's alone can compare. His life marks an era—the greatest era in the development of Christian thought between the apostolic age and the Reformation; while it was coincident with the most remarkable crisis in the history of human society from the creation to the present day.

While Augustine was living, the Roman Empire was slowly, painfully, but visibly dying; and this dissolution of the great empire was perhaps on the whole the most important secular event which has happened in the course of human history. He saw the grandest and the most powerful political institution which had ever existed upon earth in the throes of dissolution. It seemed as solid as the structure of the great world; but in Augustine's time the far-sighted realized that it was about to pass away. The barbarians were breaking into the empire at every portal; and the direst confusion, the most appalling miseries threatened the world. To those who could see the gathering darkness, but had no power to pierce it, it was simply chaos restored.

I am not about to discuss the Augustinian doctrines, which under their Calvinistic names are very familiar. My present purpose is not to consider the measure of truth which may be in them,

or to support or condemn them out of the Word of God. I rather wish to seize the broad view of God, and man's relation to God, which rules through all their modifications, and to try to account for the mighty influence which the theology of St. Augustine has wielded in the Christian world, which seems at last to be passing away. He held the moral corruption of man's nature, his freedom being "active only to evil;" and he traced that corruption to the transgression of our first parents, which involved "in the guilt as well as in the penalty of sin" every child of the human race. In this condition of utter moral impotence, man's only hope of salvation lay in the quickening, sanctifying power of the free grace of God—sovereign grace, dependent on no conditions in the recipient, but acting freely and victoriously in predestined subjects, constituting them by God's sovereign act the elect children of the kingdom; while the rest, the unchosen, the unquickened, were left—not predestined, the Church made a strenuous and successful struggle against the consequences which the employment of that term with regard to the lost would have involved—to sink, by the natural gravitation of their sin, to perdition.

The central figure in this system of doctrine is God, the absolute ruler of man and of the creation—absolute I mean in the political sense. A Being righteous but despotic, with the potter's power over the clay, claiming and exercising the right to select and to educate certain for His service and the joy of His house; claiming at the same time and exer-

cising the right to leave the rest to perish as refuse in the slime of their own sin, and the hell whose fires that sin creates and feeds. It is the ruler, ruling, as would be considered by the theologian, righteously but sternly in His kingdom, benign to the favoured few, sternly just to the rest. It is the conception which we form and cherish of the character and methods of the God of Judaism. It is what the Jews themselves came to believe of Him, when they ceased to regard their election as less a favour to them than a trust for mankind. In discussing and justifying God's revelation of Himself and ways in Judaism, we constantly adopt the Augustinian views. We shall come to see how profoundly Christian is the vital vein of thought and influence through the whole Old Testament dispensation, and seek the key to God's ways with His ancient people in the Cross.

But this view of God's character and method in the government of men which the influence of St. Augustine established in Christendom, is simply the counterpart in the spiritual sphere of that kind of rule, that notion of a kingdom, which prevailed everywhere upon earth in that great teacher's days. Man's ideas of Divine things are always deeply tinged by the ideas about earthly and human things which rule in his times. His idea of the Divine order will always be some counterpart of the human order which he sees around him, and which contents him in his day. The rights of rulers were absolute in the fifth century, and through the whole Middle Age. Men submitted as a matter of

course to the rule of an absolute will, and accepted contentedly, as the simple conditions of human existence, the cares and uncertainties, the burdens and miseries, which in those stormy times afflicted the citizens of every state which they could hear of in the wide world. A ruler issuing his autocratic decrees, though very terrible consequences might flow from them, met with a genuine submission, very wonderful to us in these constitutional times. Men were used to hard, stern methods and ideas of rule. The world was very full of misery; in every state there was a great mass of the poor and wretched, the outcasts of society; while there was an inner circle of elect, honoured, and tolerably happy ones, for whose benefit the whole system seemed to be constructed and maintained.

But the essential point of the matter is, that it was regarded as an inevitable, and, on the whole, a natural thing that it should be so. The idea, when translated to the spiritual sphere, did not therefore seem unnatural. Men read the Bible in those days, much as we read it, through the medium of the thoughts and habits which were established in their times. The conception of the Divine Kingdom, with its mass of elect citizens, and its greater mass of reprobate outcasts, a despotic will determining who should belong to the one and who should belong to the other, was so thoroughly in concord with the order of human society with which men were familiar, that they accepted it readily as the true account of the method of God in the government of the world.

Then, again, there were lines of decisive sharpness separating great sections of the human race. There were Christianity and Paganism in full antagonism, in desperate conflict. The difference between pagan and Christian society seemed so profound and clear, that salvation, the inheritance of eternal glory and blessedness, seemed the right and natural issue of the one, while damnation, eternal misery, and shame seemed as naturally the issue of the other. There was no neutral ground: pagan or Christian—damned or saved. True, there were very puzzling complications. Here and there might be seen what looked like very splendid virtues in the heathen world. But the contrast of the two societies was altogether too strong for any accidental touches of pagan virtue to soften it. The great gulf was fixed, and as yet there was no passage for genial sympathies and loves, except in the form of the most compassionate and devoted ministry. And so, under the compulsion of what seemed a stern moral necessity, the formula was formulated, There can be no virtue but by grace; there can be no grace but in the Church. The virtues of the heathen were therefore branded as splendid vices—a sentence of St. Augustine in which he utters ruthlessly the judgment of the Christian world of his time.

It expresses, I think, fairly enough the spirit of the Augustinian theology, and its bearing on the world outside the pale. It would be hard perhaps to frame any doctrine more essentially unchristian; and yet till quite recently it was the view accepted

in all our Churches. I have heard it, not in so many words, but in substance, a hundred times from our missionary platforms; nay, in the early years of my ministry I tried hard to persuade myself that it must be the truth of God.

And we must see that the Augustinian theology has certain indisputable facts of our nature, and explicit words of Scripture, to rest upon. Sin, universal, profound, twined in with all the threads of our experience, poisoning every thought, word, and work, cannot be explained away. It is there; it will force itself on our sight. Rationalizing theologians in all ages have tried to make light of it, and to lift as they thought the crushing burden off the human conscience. But in vain. The theologians have disappeared, but the burden is there still. While, on the other hand, the Bible declares plainly through its whole revelation, that without the Divine Spirit there can be nothing pure and just and holy in the human heart. Again, nothing can be more palpable, one would think, than that there is some absolute discriminating will at work on man's life and destiny. There is One who distributes gifts and graces at His pleasure, who sets down one and sets up another, and renders no account of His actions or decrees. St. Augustine says justly about Predestination, that it is no more mysterious than that there should be both Christians and pagans in the world.

So that there are some deep Scriptural ideas at the bottom of the Augustinian view of sin and of grace, and of this conception of the Divine kingdom

the Church. Surely Augustine is right so far. There is no virtue, in the highest sense, but by grace; there is no grace but in the Church. But how widely that grace is working, how large the Church is to the eye of Him who claims humanity as His own by the Incarnation, Augustine saw but dimly; nor do we see it yet with perfect clearness in our times. Augustinism, like its child Calvinism, has its strength mainly in what it affirms, its weakness in what it denies. It cannot state the doctrine of grace too strongly; it errs when it begins to settle its exclusions, and to conclude that those who follow not with its disciples, cannot possibly be following, however imperfectly, the Lord.

The thoughtful observers of these times must note that the hold which this theology has had on the mind of the evangelical Christian community generally, is seriously shaken; and that ideas of the relation of man to God, the nature of the Divine kingdom, and the future of humanity, widely divergent from the Augustinian, are working their way very rapidly and very powerfully in the Church.

The key to the transformation is the growing belief that the relation of God to the world is less fairly set forth by the relation of a king to his subjects, than by that of a father to his household: in which, in the worst case, he has to do, not with enemies, but with prodigals, the objects of his profound compassion, and, in spite of their recklessness, as the parable teaches us, of his yearning love. The key of the theology which has ruled in the

Church thus far has been the monarchic principle of government, with which, especially in its most absolute despotic forms, man has been through all these ages too sadly familiar.* The key to the theology which is winning its way, and which will rule in the Church of the future, is the Father's authority in and government of a household—that household of God being, not an elect company, but the wide human world. The problem of the future is the reconciliation of all the dark and difficult passages of the Divine government, as we gather our knowledge of it from the Scripture on the one hand, and from the history of this sad world on the other, with the fatherly heart and the fatherly reign of God.

And this transformation has to be accounted for. Whence does it spring? I have shown in a former chapter how spiritual ideas descend and mould the secular aims and interests of men. But these influences are always reciprocal. The current tone of thought and chain of experience in the world reacts powerfully on man's spiritual ideas. How is it that men have come to entertain, very widely, not in little sects, but generally through all that is intelligent and progressive in Christian society, these new ideas of the Divine reign? It seems to me that the transformation is the inevitable result

* It is a remarkable confirmation of this relation, that in Mahomedan countries, where the despotism of the despots is most unmitigated, the theology is fatalist to the extreme, even to the paralysis of all the noblest faculties of man's nature—of everything out of which a lasting progress can spring.

of those new and wonderful phases of development through which, as we have seen, society has passed since the Great Revolution. There can be no question that the great sceptical writers, whose influence on the Revolution and on the course of modern thought I have glanced at in a previous chapter, did very much indirectly to humanize men's notions about God, God's kingdom, and God's relations to the human world. The world owes a great debt of gratitude to them, as it does to many of its sceptics; a debt which it is always very slow to recognize, and very unwilling to pay. But these writers took a more comprehensive view of human history than had before been attempted. The philosophy of history was mainly created by the *Encyclopédistes*; though the services of Montesquieu and other independent writers of the eighteenth century, including Kant, must by no means be overlooked.

And it has grown increasingly apparent, as men have studied humanity, that man's history is a great whole; and that, as Paul saw plainly in his day, the pagan nations belong to the Christian by a very close *nexus*; that, in fact, their cultivation and development up to a certain point was the essential condition of the revelation of Christ Jesus to the world. It follows, then, that there must be something fundamentally false in the dogma which regards them as outside the thought, the care, and the love of God. The study of humanity as a whole, of human history in its completeness, has generated the idea that God must regard and deal with it as a whole; and that a true theology will

discover some principle of harmony between the love which describes His essential nature, and His dealings, not with a select communion, but with the whole human race.

Then, too, man's ideas of the nature and function of a government, and of the rights of the governed, have advanced by immense strides since the Great Revolution. That event brought the rights of man very plainly on to the stage; it developed philanthropic ideas of singular largeness and tenderness amongst a people who, when the frenzy of passion seized them, leapt like tigers at each other's throats. But passions pass, ideas live on, and in the end rule. The idea has spread, and may now be regarded as fairly established, that the good of the great mass is and ought to be the end of all government; that by this all governments ought to be tested, and either condemned or justified. It was inevitable that these ideas should in the long run exercise some influence on men's conceptions of the nature and end of the Divine reign. The notion that the blessing of God's government is for a section only of humanity, the favourites among the children, that, considering the proportion of heathendom to Christendom, and the proportion of the saints to the sinners in Christendom itself, the great mass of the human race must be born into and kept alive in the world with the clear certainty that they must live on for ever in endless torments, appears increasingly terrible to the moral judgment of mankind. And so the conviction spreads, that in a true theology there will be found some

conception of God's relation to and mode of dealing with men, which, while on the one hand it holds fast the fact of man's freedom—Pantheism is the grave of the higher life,—shall yet recognize God as dealing in mercy with every child of Adam, seeking in ways unknown to us to bring the influence of His grace to bear to call the prodigal home, and only resigning the effort when all the forces even of the Divine love have been exhausted, and men perish "hating their own souls, and loving the gates of death."

These considerations will help us to explain the relations of the Calvinistic and Unitarian theology, which is another prominent topic of our times. Unitarianism is in a very important sense the child of Calvinism; that is, the child of a reaction which was inevitable. Calvinism in the nature of things must develop something like the Unitarian doctrine as its counterpoise. And for two reasons. An essentially vicious element in Calvinism is the schism which it seems to introduce into the Divine nature. Only in an age of human schisms could it have been born. The Father, angry, representing justice, the Son, compassionate, representing mercy, enter as separate contracting parties, making their contract not without difficulty, into the Calvinistic scheme of the faith. The Scripture, on the other hand, represents the Divine nature in its oneness. The Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, one God, working out the scheme of man's redemption. The Father's heart, His love even to the rebellious also, being the fountain out of which that mercy flows which was

expressed in all its fulness on Calvary; whose work, through the mission of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, will be consummated in heaven.

The Unitarian rises up as a witness—a partial, a most imperfect, but still an earnest and persistent witness—for this unity. He proclaims, Whatever may be the truth about the Divine nature, unity is essential. This interior schism or antagonism in the Divine nature, which is supposed to be reduced to a harmony by the work of the Saviour, can have no real existence; it is the dream of man's schismatic heart. God is one; and He must act in His unity in all His operations; there is but one mind, one will, one heart, and that a loving one, concerned in the work of the redemption of the world. Thus far the Unitarian is right. It is essential to maintain the moral unity of the Godhead in the operation of redemption. But the creed fails miserably to answer the questions and to supply the needs of the human spirit in the sphere beyond. A Unitarian Gospel, if it drew no diviner elements from the creed of the Catholic Church, must simply in the end starve to death the higher life of mankind.

There is another point on which the Unitarian is strong in righteous protest. A rigid Calvinism presents for our homage and worship a partial God. The kingdom of heaven, according to its view, is a despotic empire, in which the principle of favoritism reigns. The Bible, on the other hand, declares explicitly that God is no respecter of persons, that He views all with equal eyes, and loves all with equal love; and to this the Unitarian has borne

faithful witness during the Calvinistic reign of the last two hundred years.* But there his ministry ends. He can bear witness against partiality in God, but he has feeble means, in his creed, of bearing witness to His love. "Hereby know we the love of God, because He hath laid down His life for us." How does the Unitarian know it? What can he tell us about it which can comfort, heal, strengthen, or gladden poor, torn, sin-stained, sin-tormented hearts? Hence the Unitarians, like the Sadducees, find their disciples chiefly among the cultivated and polished few. The great toiling, struggling, suffering mass find no comfort in their Gospel, because no life, and, in the deepest sense, no love.

But on the other hand, there is a phenomenon connected with Unitarianism which is worthy of remark in comparison with certain other phenomena connected with Evangelical orthodoxy, which have of late years been painfully conspicuous. Those who are at all closely connected with Unitarian society will have been struck with the general tone of high-mindedness, intelligence, and charity which characterizes it; while these graces seem to dwindle sadly in our modern evangelical atmosphere. Our journals, our organs, our coteries, with few noble exceptions, have been chiefly conspicuous for the absence of these qualities, which seem to flourish

* The earliest history of this great controversy, from its first beginnings in Vicenza, in the middle of the sixteenth century, through its Swiss and Polish stages, are full of interest, as is also the history of John Biddle, a man of great learning and exalted piety, who formed a society in England during the Protectorate.

in theological atmospheres outside our pale. Happily there is a most blessed change passing over us; the tone of religious society is already set in a morally much higher key than that with which some of us were too sadly familiar half a generation ago.

But the present question is, What reason must be assigned for this contrast, which in past years must have struck all but the most casual observers of the phenomena of our religious life? I believe that one very important reason of the low estate into which, in these recent days, the evangelical community has fallen, in point of intelligence, high-mindedness, and charity, is connected with the theology of fear in which we have so largely dealt. Utterly misunderstanding the meaning of the words of St. Paul which stand in our version, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men," we have endeavoured systematically to frighten men into the kingdom of heaven by terrors; or, and it is hardly less debasing to the moral nature, we have sought to allure them by the promise of safety and joy. The higher motives of action have been almost left out of the teachings and exhortations of our popular evangelical theology. We have spoken to men, not of health, soundness, life, but of safety; and the root which we render salvation, meant life before it meant soundness, and soundness, health, before it meant safety. We have dwelt almost exclusively on the secondary, the poorer, the baser meaning, to the exclusion of the sense which connects salvation with life; and we have suffered

thereby a miserable moral impoverishment, from which we are but beginning to emerge, through the tonic influence of a healthier, manlier doctrine, which the Unitarian has never suffered to slip from his hand.

But Unitarianism is breaking up rapidly and vanishing. Many of the leading minds of the school almost reprobate the name. That which will destroy it, and will give also the death-blow to the narrow and selfish error from which it sprang, will be a theology the very heart's core of which is the Divine love.

Out of the same main tendency which I have endeavoured to trace spring the Broad and the Ritualistic schools in the Established Church. I mention them together, for though they tend as widely asunder as the poles, they really have but one root. They both seem to spring from an earnest desire to lay down, or rather to find laid down, a broader basis for the kingdom of heaven than our dogmatic theology furnishes on the one hand, or an experimental basis of Church fellowship on the other. The one aims at the result by mitigating the severity of dogma, by widening beliefs until their limits become so vague that all real form of knowledge and truth is lost; the other seeks its end by upholding dogma, but tempering its hardness, after the Roman fashion, by the sacraments and the motherly influence of the Church. The one would widen the pale so as to include vast outlying districts of human thought and experience; the other would put forth all possible attractions, some of them

avowedly belonging to the lower forms of influence on men, to draw great masses of outcasts to the home of the Church. Perhaps ultimately it may be found that the Revolution is the parent of the broader movement; the Wesleyan revival, unlike as they are in form, of the other. The danger is here—a very pressing danger, I venture to think the very gravest of our dangers,—that all firm hold on doctrinal truth will be lost by the Broad Church on the one hand, and that all real hold on the living Christ will be lost by the High Anglicans on the other.

There is a very powerful school of thinkers among us, who have set themselves steadily to depreciate dogma, and they magnify in opposition what they call the life, but which often seems to be simply the vague sentiment, of religion. In closing this series of essays, in which I have tried to offer to young minds what help is in my power towards the formation of sound views on some of the most perplexing social and ecclesiastical questions of the day, I add some few words on this last point, which is certainly not the least important of them all.

Sound thinking seems to me to be related to right living, much as good air, good food, and other sanitary conditions are related to good health. They are not the health, they cannot make the health; but yet the health depends largely upon them for its fair and fruitful development. You may find men with a heavenly simplicity and beauty of character with the narrowest and most selfish of creeds; just as you may find a child of splendid

vitality and vigour rolling about in the dirt of the squalidest slums in London. But there is always something strongly exceptional here. Dirt, closeness, and pallor are in near and constant relation to each other. And barren, selfish, and base ideas of the Christian calling and the government of God are just as closely related to a palled, flaccid, and impotent moral life. Man is made to theologize. It is the dignity and the crown of his moral manhood. He shares this power with no creature in the creation. He is framed to think out the thoughts of God after Him, and to cherish an intelligent and active sympathy with His plans and hopes. To entertain this sympathy he must know God and the things of God; he must know how the universe is related to God and to man. That is, he must frame a theology.

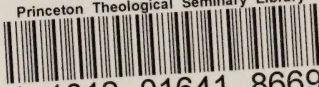
But the mischief of all our theologies is that they measure so feebly the magnitude of their subject. They start with the presumption that they can frame a tolerably adequate scheme of the universe, and search out the Almighty to perfection. So thought not Paul. After a mighty effort to scale the heights and to fathom the depths of God's purposes in Christ, his tired energy droops, and his soul breathes out its last breath in the exclamation, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans xi. 33.) It takes many souls, many churches, and many ages to create a theology which shall adequately present Divine ideas. It is

forming, and age by age it grows. The Biblical ideas of sin and grace have been thoroughly wrought into the world's heart by the Augustinian theology. The world will not lose them. The backbone of the Calvinistic theology, "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; of grace, not of works, lest any man should boast," abides a truth for ever. It will be the confession of the redeemed creation through all the ages of its eternal bliss.

But the manner and the range of the working of that grace has to be wrought out into clear form by the theology of the future. The world as well as the Bible is full of dark, sad difficulties; theodicies under any conditions are hard. But the problem of the Church of the future is the reconciliation of these dark perplexities and sad anomalies with that love of God to every human creature of which the cross of Christ is the only measure. The Church will only grasp the grandeur of its vocation when it sets itself to realize, by its ministry, by the witness of its word, by the outshining of its life, that hitherto blighted hope of every revolution which has convulsed and every reformation which has purged the world—the brotherhood of man on the basis of Truth, Righteousness, and Love.

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